

MICHAEL NOVAK ON MOTHER TERESA

NATIONAL REVIEW

Stay

the Editors on Iraq



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APR: 12.99

Minimum payment

Time:

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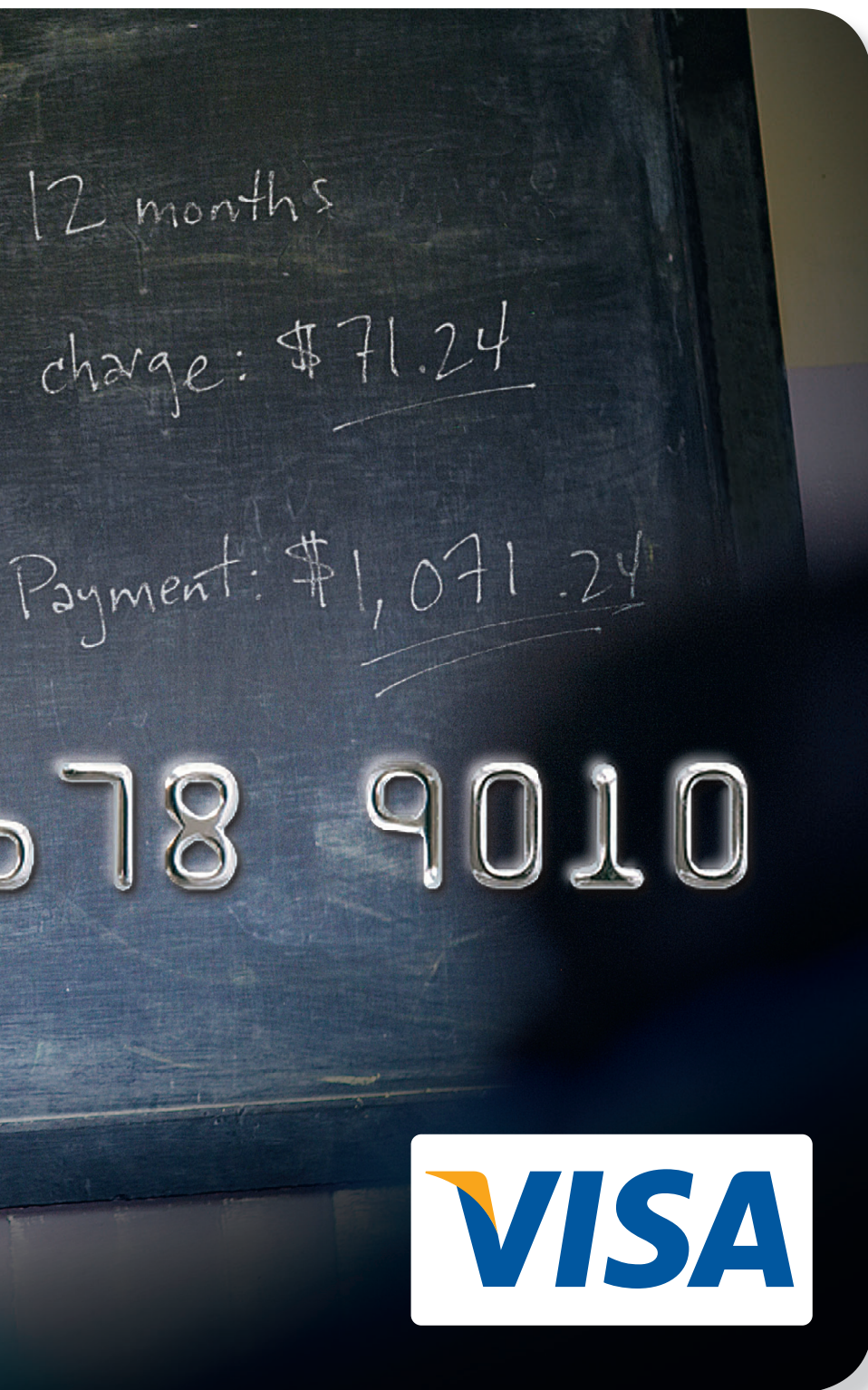
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■ AT WAR: A SPECIAL EDITORIAL

Stay

A year ago today, we were losing the Iraq War. Now we have made real progress on the ground, and the domestic politics of the war are improving as well. It is true that the surge—which has led to an amazing turnaround in some of the most embattled areas of Iraq—will have to begin receding sometime next year. That, however, is no reason to begin ending it prematurely this year. This war can still be won, but only if we have the nerve and the patience to see it through. *By the Editors*



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Lily P. Aldana
Lead Systems Engineer



NATIONAL REVIEW

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NICE

Life has imitated art in Britain's funnily named National Institute for Clinical Excellence, which Theodore Dalrymple's "Health of the State" (August 13) identifies as one of the gatekeepers for socialized medicine in the UK. Not only does the agency probably foster more mediocrity than excellence, its Orwellian acronym, NICE, was anticipated in C. S. Lewis's 1945 novel about science gone bad, *That Hideous Strength*. There it denotes the National Institute for Coordinated Experiments, whose Faustian and ultimately ghoulish projects are at last thwarted by the supernatural intervention of Merlin himself. What magician will it take to rescue British health care from today's NICE mess?

John Andrews
Centennial, Colo.

NICE II

Ramesh Ponnuru makes many good points in his article "Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda" (September 10), yet he unduly complicates his analysis. The reasons the Republican party has lost its footing can be boiled down to two: It has strayed from core conservative principles, and the Bush administration and

Senate GOP have tried to "out nice" the liberal Democrats. On domestic policy, on issue after issue, President Bush and the Republicans extended olive branches to the Democrats, but Democrats received these overtures with their left hand and used their right to plunge a knife into the political back of the Republicans. When Republicans try to outbid Democrats on domestic issues, they lose; when they stick to their principles and take on the Democrats on their own terms, they win. When the two parties' stances on issues blur in the minds of American voters, voters will lean toward the Democrats. And indeed, why vote for a "me too" party when you can have the real thing?

If the Republicans are to make a comeback they need a leader who will draw clear distinctions between the two parties, and stand fast on conservative principles.

Corey J. Smith
Bristow, Va.



NATIONAL REVIEW encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com. Please include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters will be edited for space and clarity.

home buyer, meet eight pages of simplicity

Introducing The Simple Facts™ Mortgage information isn't hard to get. The problem is it's usually hard to understand. That's why the Mortgage Bankers Association created The Simple Facts. In it you'll find the pros and cons of common mortgages, financial profiles of the people who typically choose a type of mortgage, even questions to ask your lender — all in plain English. Spanish, too.

It's the latest piece in our ongoing commitment to financial literacy, and you can download a copy from our consumer Web site, HomeLoanLearningCenter.com. While you're there, try the new Simple Calculator™ as well — you can compare up to four types of mortgages at one time, all with the information you enter. Just go to **www.HomeLoanLearningCenter.com**

Start with a baseline for judging
the type of loan that's right for you.

the simple facts™ a guide to mortgages

The type of mortgage you choose should be based on your financial situation today, your best estimate of what it will be in the future, how long you plan to own the home or "stay in" the mortgage and your comfort level with assuming the risk of potential increases in required payments.

What else you can expect that will help you
make the choice right for you.

The Simple Facts™ was created by the Mortgage Bankers Association — not any single lender — to help you easily identify the pros and cons of each type of mortgage and choose the one best for you.

Inside you will find brief descriptions of different types of mortgages, reasons some people choose each particular mortgage and why others avoid them, and a set of questions everyone should ask their lender before making their final loan choice. You should use it along with other information on interest rates, lender fees and closing costs.

Borrowers choose adjustable rate mortgages because the initial principal and interest payments are usually lower. A lower initial payment can make the home more affordable at first, but the borrower must also be willing to accept the risk of — and be confident in their ability to afford — a potentially higher principal and interest payment when the rate adjusts upward. The adjustment date varies, but is specified in the mortgage documents. Depending on the loan, it can occur even within the first year and sometimes results in significantly higher principal and interest payments. With some mortgages, there's even the possibility of an increasing loan balance.

Ever wonder why there are so many
types of mortgages? Here's why.

There are two basic categories of mortgages: fixed-rate mortgages and adjustable rate mortgages (ARM). Within each category, there are variations.

However, in nearly all mortgages, two factors are at play: how predictable the payments are and how low, or affordable, they are — at least initially.

Borrowers choose fixed-rate mortgages because the principal and interest payments are steady and predictable. But in so doing, they give up an initial principal and interest payment that is usually lower. They may also give up the opportunity to get a lower rate without refinancing if interest rates fall.

Why do different types of mortgages offered at the same time have different interest rates? Mortgage interest rates vary based on who (borrower or lender) assumes more of the risk of interest rate hikes and for how long. Adjustable rate mortgages usually offer lower initial rates because the borrower assumes a greater share of the risk of interest rate increases. A fixed-rate mortgage usually has a higher initial interest rate because the lender assumes more of the risk of interest rate increases over the life of the mortgage.

For all the different types, it all starts
with a few simple variables.

fixed vs. adjustable in a nutshell

Mortgages with payment adjustments usually result in lower payments at first but expose you to the risk of possibly significant payment increases if interest rates go up. Mortgages with predictable, fixed payments could cost you more over the life of the mortgage, and require refinancing (and its costs) to take advantage of falling interest rates.

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THE WEEK

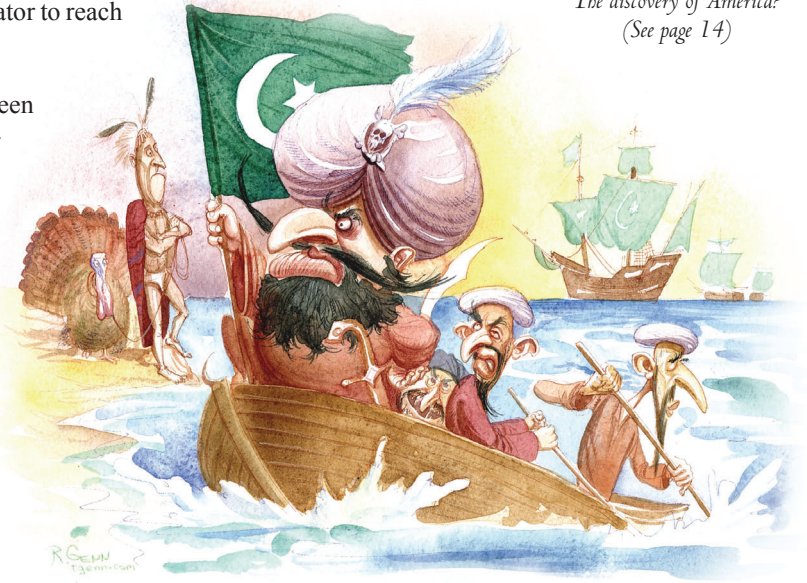
■ Since when is it a crime for a Republican senator to reach out to gays?

■ Larry Craig jokes, such as the above, have been a guilty pleasure. The senator cruised a bathroom, then pled guilty to a misdemeanor, hoping it would all go away. It is right that he step down. Vital public amenities should not be places of assignation. Vice-squad methods often involve a measure of entrapment, but so be it; the alternative is Times Square in the old days. It is pointless to grump about partisan advantage in scandals. How real is it anyway? Randy Democrats have suffered in different ways: James McGreevey is toast; Bill Clinton was impeached; Ted Kennedy never became president. Do the right thing. If you can't, don't do the wrong thing on a public stage.

■ With the formal announcement of his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, former Tennessee senator Fred Thompson joins a field with no traditional frontrunner. Rudy Giuliani tops national polls, while Mitt Romney holds a lead in Iowa and New Hampshire. Thompson is playing catch-up against two talented politicians. Both are formidable fundraisers and energetic campaigners with well-managed organizations. The early reviews fault the former actor's unofficial campaign for its anemic fundraising, lackluster retail politicking, and multiple staff shakeups. The reviews might prove prescient, but they are premature. Thompson enters a fluid field with an apparent opening for a standard bearer who has strong conservative convictions and can enthuse the center-right coalition that elects Republican presidents. The role is open; the next couple of months will tell whether Fred Thompson can credibly fill it.

■ In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Kansas City, President Bush drew a parallel between the Iraq and Vietnam wars. "Then as now, people argued . . . that if we would just withdraw, the killing would end." Howls of protest followed ("bizarre"—*New York Times*; "it just boggles the mind"—historian Robert Dallek). It certainly boggled liberal minds in 1975 to think that Southeast Asia could become worse, after decades of warfare. And yet it did become worse, thanks to genocide in Cambodia, concentration camps and mass flight in Vietnam, and 30 years of Communism. Two million Iraqis have fled their country, and those who remain are ravaged by war. Yet we can see the future envisaged by the enemy in Taliban-ruled Afghan-

*The discovery of America?
(See page 14)*



istan, where al-Qaeda was an honored guest, and in present-day Iran. If anything, President Bush did not go far enough, for one of the worst results of American defeat in Vietnam was the emboldening of radicals worldwide—including in Iran. The defeats of one generation march on, as do the defeatists.

■ Alberto Gonzales is leaving the Justice Department after months of being a Democratic punching bag. Many of the hits he took were undeserved. There is no evidence that the "U.S. attorneys scandal" deserves that label. The administration, including Gonzales, mishandled the firing and replacement of some prosecutors, but was within its rights to handle personnel matters however it chose. The notion that Gonzales committed perjury in his testimony before Congress, meanwhile, is a smear. Gonzales was testifying about the National Security Administration's monitoring of communications by suspected terrorists. He said, accurately, that the surveillance program being discussed was not controversial within the administration. This testimony is being called "misleading" because an earlier version of the program had been controversial. But Gonzales was careful to explain that he was making a narrow claim—to the extent that the interrupting Democratic senators allowed him to clarify anything. Gonzales did not, unfortunately, have the credibility to defend himself. He was too disengaged and too incompetent, as his flailing around during the opening weeks of the attorneys story demonstrated. As unfair as his Democratic critics have been, the worst thing that happened to him is that President Bush showed the poor judgment to

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THE WEEK...

pick him as attorney general, and he had the poor judgment to accept.

■ The primary, wrote Theodore H. White in *The Making of the President 1960*, “is America’s most original contribution to the art of democracy.” He could afford to be charitable: In 1960, there were only 16 primaries; on the Democratic side, John F. Kennedy entered just ten; the first important contest was Wisconsin, on April 5. Now primaries jam up around the usual opening day like commuters on a subway platform, and Florida and Michigan are threatening to hold primaries in January. The alternative to primaries, as White knew, is nomination by bosses. Since there are no effective bosses anymore, primaries are our fate. But the maniacal bunching, and crazed forward motion—why not Christmas primaries?—are tailor-made for untimely stampedes. Let us have clusters of primaries, regional or chosen by lot, spaced over several months. That would preserve the winnowing function of an ordeal, and keep the process within sight of Election Day.

■ An Iowa judge called his state’s marriage law unconstitutional, ordering the government to recognize same-sex marriages. The leading Democratic presidential candidates all claim to oppose same-sex marriage, but are unwilling to do a thing about it. The Republican candidates at least say that they will try to appoint judges who will not issue such activist rulings. But they are not much more willing to take action. Fred Thompson, Rudy Giuliani, and John McCain say they will not support a constitutional amendment until federal courts start moving against marriage laws—by which time it might be too late. Only Mitt Romney, among the leading candidates, says that an amendment is needed to protect marriage from the judges. We hope Iowans will reward his stand, and encourage the other candidates to move toward it.

■ No sooner did New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg put the kibosh on his presidential ambitions than other candidates began stealing his issues. Former senator John Edwards and former governor Mike Huckabee have both come out for federal bans on smoking in public places; Sens. Hillary Clinton and Sam Brownback said they would leave the crusade against demon weed to states and localities. Can trans-fats be far behind? Health obsessions are the Puritanism of American life, displaced onto fitness. But perhaps the source is even older. The listing of unclean things and conditions recalls Leviticus; it is the kosher of secularism.

■ The press and Democratic presidential candidates may be panicking over the “subprime meltdown” of 2007, but so far policymakers are not. Fed chairman Ben Bernanke says he is willing to expand the money supply, but only if he sees evidence of deflation—not to bail out the companies that made bad loans and the institutions that invested in them. The Bush administration is making some modest regulatory changes to help troubled borrowers. If they are facing rising interest pay-

ments, they will be able to use Federal Housing Administration loans to renegotiate terms, and they will face no tax penalties for canceling mortgage debt as part of that renegotiation. The Democratic candidates want bailouts and new regulations to keep lenders from being too aggressive. But some homeowners have done fine with subprime loans, and the way to keep lenders from making foolish loans is to insist that they take most of the losses when those loans go bad. The government’s response to this mess has been like this sector of the housing market: subprime, but not half bad.

■ Six years after September 11, the CIA is still resisting accountability. Two years ago, the inspector general finished a report on the CIA’s performance before the attacks. An executive summary has been released only now, and over the strong opposition of CIA director Michael Hayden, who said it would “consume time and attention revisiting ground that is already well plowed.” The summary details the derelict performance of key CIA officials, including former director George Tenet, and recommends the creation of an accountability board to review the findings and assess individual responsibility for the numerous failings it documents. Because the CIA’s management failings and negligent complacency about the terrorist threat happened on Bill Clinton’s watch, Democrats are unlikely to create the accountability board. But it is the Bush administration that has failed to hold officials responsible for their wholly inadequate job performance. It bears repeating: George Tenet should have been fired. Instead, he has his medal and his lucrative book deal. Congressional Republicans should insist on the creation of the accountability board. The public deserves to have its public officials held to account, and competent, dedicated CIA employees should know that performance matters. The ridiculous Valerie Plame affair, manufactured and promoted by CIA officials, was a disgraceful waste of time and attention. Demanding a first-rate effort on counterterrorism from the CIA is worth whatever it takes.

■ A reporter asked 1988 Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis for his thoughts on this race. He touted grassroots organizing—good advice—but gave an odd explanation. “We’re not going to outspend the other guys. We’re probably not going to out-strategize them. And some crazy guy will

OBAMA COURTS MIAMI

*A pitch for family giving
To Cubans has gone bust.
The boos reached Coral Gables;
The cheers were less robust.
A sloppy staff, ignoring
Reno’s kidnapping ploy
Left many in Miami
Muttering more than “Oy.”*

—W. H. VON DREELE



Two new books by Kiron Skinner of the Hoover Institution

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EDITED BY KIRON K. SKINNER

FOREWORDS BY PAVEL PALAZHCENKO AND GEORGE P. SHULTZ

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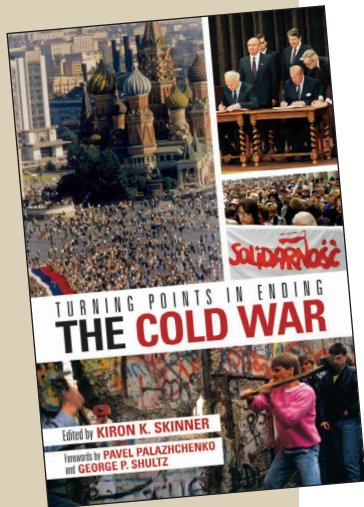
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The Strategy of Campaigning: Lessons from Ronald Reagan and Boris Yeltsin

KIRON K. SKINNER, SERHIY KUDELIA, BRUCE BUENO DE MESQUITA, AND
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FOREWORD BY GEORGE P. SHULTZ

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— Jack F. Matlock Jr., U.S. ambassador to the USSR,
1987–1991

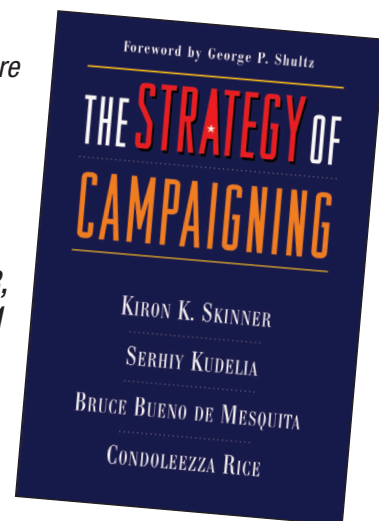
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THE WEEK...

blow up a building with three weeks to go, you know, and then we'll be back in Bush-land again." Dukakis is saying that a terrorist attack in the home stretch would cause a rally around the incumbent party. Does he think the Democrats are vulnerable on national security? Why? Could it be because people like Michael Dukakis call terrorists "crazy guy[s]"? They have wicked and irrational ends, but they are not crazy. Michael Dukakis carried ten states and the District of Columbia in 1988 because he could not grasp the seriousness of killers, like Willie Horton, or of Communists, even in their endgame. Democrats in 2008 should go and do otherwise.

■ A decade ago, Republican senator John Warner was widely seen as a buffoon. Now he is stepping down, and his press could not be better. Warner "surprised everyone by becoming so much more than an elder statesman," wrote a *Washington Post* reporter, under the headline, "Warner's Career Marked by Courage to Buck Conventional Wisdom." Warner has not really changed. He has recently had the courage to join a group of

senators who stopped windmills from being built near where they and their relatives sail. The golden coverage is a reward for Warner's decision to advocate retreat in Iraq this year, and belated recognition for his vote against Robert Bork two decades ago. In both cases, Warner was bucking his party, all right, but only in order to *follow* conventional wisdom. That Warner is departing at a moment when Democrats are likely to pick up his seat is the cherry on top. Don't believe what you've heard about the media's partisan bias: Our top journalists are always willing to go to bat for the right kind of Republican.

■ No new hurricanes have crashed into the Gulf Coast. But two years after Katrina, a mean season of racial and religious demagoguery is settling upon Louisiana. On October 20, or perhaps in a runoff on November 17, voters are likely to elect GOP congressman Bobby Jindal as the state's next governor. This result—a state revolt against Democratic incompetence—flies in the face of a Democratic storyline about a national revolt against Republican incompetence. So liberals will put their spin on Jindal's victory and claim it was the result of Hurricane Katrina's driving black Democrats from Louisiana and literally whitewashing the state. Demographers, however, say that the black vote probably will drop by only 2.5 percent—significant

Bust and Boom

FINANCIAL markets gyrated wildly in August, in part because of concerns that the U.S. housing sector would bring the rest of the economy down. But markets were positively sedate compared with many pundits, who look at the U.S. housing sector and see Armageddon. Moneynews.com columnist John Browne expressed a typical sentiment when he said, "The busting of the wildly inflated property boom will be like that of the collapse of the dot.com boom. . . . We feel the real estate bust will spread into the general economy and other assets including the stock market."

Turn on a cable-news channel and listen to an economics discussion, and you get the distinct impression that housing activity in the U.S. has just gone through an unprecedented and irrational boom. The morality tale is cited as proof that markets do not work, and that new and intrusive government regulation is needed.

A look at the data, however, tells a markedly different story.

The accompanying chart relates real investment in housing by U.S. households to real GDP from 1952 until this year. The chart reveals that housing investment has been volatile throughout the past half-century. By the standards of past booms and busts, the current episode looks tame. By this measure, the boom was not nearly as high as past indiscretions, and the bust has already reversed it.

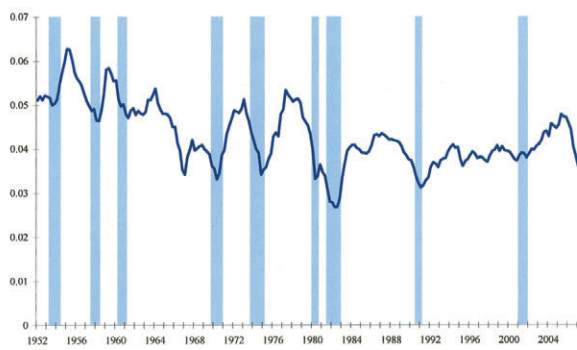
Indeed, a simple, rational, free-market story explains the current housing mess. The Federal Reserve kept interest rates very low as the economy recovered slowly from the last recession. Those low rates boosted housing activity. When rates were lifted as the economy finally took off, housing activity fell back.

Simple and straightforward economics explains price movements as well. When interest rates were very low, buyers flocked into the housing market looking for homes. All of that extra demand drove up prices of the existing housing stock. Home builders responded to the higher prices by building new homes. When enough of those were finished, it put downward pressure on prices because of the increase in supply.

Of course, there have been excesses. But the market is dealing well with them. Those who made imprudent loans have lost a lot of money, and will not be around to lend again the next time the housing market takes off. Prudent lenders will survive, and will finance the next takeoff, which, the data suggest, might not be that far away.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

Real Residential Investment by Household Sector Relative to Real GDP



NOTE: RECESSIONS ARE SHADED
SOURCE: FEDERAL RESERVE; BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS



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THE WEEK...

in a close contest, but not decisive if Jindal wins big. Democrats in Louisiana are feeling so desperate about their circumstances that they've taken to running a television ad that portrays Jindal, a convert to Catholicism, as an anti-Protestant bigot. The inept attack may actually redound to Jindal's advantage. It also presents the possibility of a "Sister Souljah" moment for national Democrats: an opportunity to condemn extremism within their own ranks, as Bill Clinton did when he was running for president. So far, none of his would-be successors has taken it.

■ Ahmed Mohamed and Youssef Megahed, Egyptian nationals and students at the University of South Florida's school of engineering, have been indicted in South Carolina for transporting explosives across state lines. The Council on American-Islamic Relations was quick to defend the duo, stressing at the time of the arrest that they were just kids with fireworks. When it emerged that those fireworks were in fact pipe bombs, CAIR changed its tune and sang the racial-profiling blues instead. But terrorist watchdogs are reporting that Mohamed had previously been arrested in Egypt on terrorism charges, and had produced an Internet video showing how to construct a remote-control car bomb. It's no surprise that the terrorist ingénues should have wound up at USF's engineering school, which was converted by former professor (and current prisoner) Sami al-Arian into a center of operations for Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Al-Arian was another of CAIR's favored causes, though his guilt in aiding terrorists did little to tarnish their already black résumé. Another day, another (likely) guilty party, and America's leading Islamic advocacy group shows its colors once more.

■ The Bush administration finally took a stab at enforcing immigration laws at the workplace, only to get hit by a lawsuit. The Social Security Administration was set to notify employers when their employees' identification numbers did not match the agency's records. The employers would then have 90 days to fire employees who could not prove their legal status—or face charges for employing them. Big business, big labor, and the ACLU protested, and got a judge to stay the implementation of the rules. All the more reason, as blogger Mickey Kaus points out, to be grateful the "comprehensive immigration reform" did not pass. If it had, we would at best be looking at an immediate amnesty, while the enforcement provisions of the deal were tied up in court. The lawsuit is also evidence of another proposition: The reason the law hasn't been enforced is not that enforcement is impossible; it's that some people don't want it to happen.

■ Elvira Arellano, the illegal immigrant from Mexico who holed up in a Chicago church for a year, and who has now been deported to her home country, strikes us as an interesting psychological study. On the one hand, Ms. Arellano is vocally patriotic. Speaking from Mexico after her deportation, she enthused that: "I am in my country. I can walk through the streets free, without fear." The unmarried Ms. Arellano is also

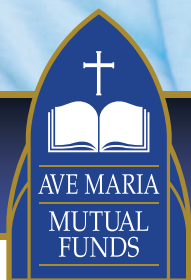
keen for her eight-year-old son, a U.S. "anchor baby" citizen, to attend school in Mexico. "He will know that he has a marvelous future here," she gushed. Yet Ms. Arellano appears to have dedicated her entire adult life to getting *out of Mexico and into the U.S.* She is still trying, apparently not a whit deterred by her recent, second deportation. Her latest wheeze, after having been fawned over as a national heroine by Mexico's media and politicians, is to suggest she be appointed "ambassador for peace and justice"—so that she can return to the U.S. on a diplomatic visa.

■ Benazir Bhutto and Pervez Musharraf have their disagreements, but on some of the most important issues they see eye to eye: Both are reformist, pro-Western, and relatively liberal. It's not surprising, then, that they are trying to work out a power-sharing deal that would allow Musharraf to serve another term at his country's helm with the support of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. The agreement is by no means concluded, and it remains to be seen whether Musharraf will step down from his role as head of Pakistan's military (as many argue he is constitutionally obliged to do). In or out of uniform, Musharraf will wield power for a time to come. What matters is that he continue to fight Islamism and terrorists, and that he strengthen the liberal and democratic elements of Pakistani politics. A deal with Bhutto would be in keeping with that agenda.



■ The announcement that North Korea has agreed to "disclose and dismantle" its nuclear program by the end of the year raises more questions than it answers. Will Pyongyang declare the clandestine uranium-enrichment program it is widely believed to have, in addition to the plutonium facilities that are already documented? Will it tell us precisely what technologies and equipment it has shared with the likes of Syria and Iran? Will it dismantle the atomic bombs it has already built? Will it rein in its ballistic-missile program, in accordance with treaty obligations? Will it allow intrusive snap inspections? No one knows. If the answer to all these questions is yes, the world will be safer. If not—and if the U.S. normalizes relations with Pyongyang anyway—then a dangerous regime will have won a stunning giveaway.

■ Judicial authorities in Estonia have brought a charge of genocide against 88-year-old Arnold Meri. As a functionary of the Soviet-puppet government of Estonia in 1949, Meri participated in the postwar mass deportation of Estonian citizens to Siberia. An ardent Communist—he had been awarded the Order of Lenin the previous year—Meri later rose to be a deputy minister of education in the puppet regime. He was wearing his Red Army uniform with pride as late as this May, when he showed up at a Soviet Victory Day commemoration. To add a layer of irony, Meri's cousin Lennart Meri, who died in 2006, was a hero of Estonian independence, a survivor of the Siberian camps, and first president of independent post-Soviet Estonia. At news of



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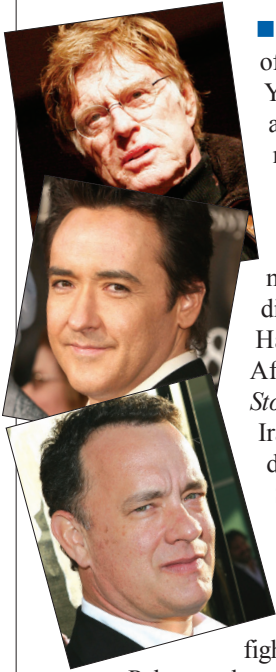
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THE WEEK...

the charges against Meri, the Bear was heard to growl. Via a spokesman, Russian president Vladimir Putin said: "We are naturally very sorry that instead of looking into the future, the Estonian government is still at war with the past." Not war, Mr. President, only justice, of which Russians themselves have seen all too little.



■ Hollywood is about to release a batch of Terror War movies. What are they like? You'll know when you see them, but here are thumbnail advance sketches from mainstream media. *Lions for Lambs*: Robert Redford is an anti-war professor whose students end up fighting in Afghanistan. *Grace Is Gone*: John Cusack must tell his children that their mother died in Iraq. *Charlie Wilson's War*: Tom Hanks aids anti-Soviet mujahideen in Afghanistan (who become the Taliban). *Stop-Loss*: A soldier refuses to return to Iraq. *The Fall of the Warrior King*: Soldiers drown an Iraqi civilian. *Redacted*: Soldiers rape an Iraqi girl and murder her family. The director of the last is Brian De Palma, who says, "The pictures are what will stop the war." No. The pictures would stop only one side from fighting. The other will just keep going. De

Palma et al. certainly behave as if they want that side to win. But saying that would be McCarthyite, and then they'd just make movies about *that* for 40 years . . .

■ Once, he was a manly man to whose patriotic valor every little boy aspired. But now, G.I. Joe has gone the way of the internationalists. The eponymous hero of Paramount Pictures' *G.I. Joe* won't be an American soldier at all—rather, an acronym, standing for Global Integrated Joint Operating Entity. Which means, in other words, G.I. JOE is not even a person, but a global crime-fighting unit, located not in America, but in the gray, boring place that is Brussels, the same city that is home to the EU's powerful Commission. Of course, a truthful depiction of such an entity would require about two hours of dawdling, fawning, and appeasing, and two minutes of action. At least we can expect explosions and heroism if Paramount wants its product to sell. But somehow a battle to save the Common Agricultural Policy seems less than inspiring.

■ Prisoners in our jails are not allowed to wear belts for fear they will use them as weapons, or as instruments of suicide. In a deplorable case of "owning the insult," young black toughs have taken to wearing low-slung pants in honor of their jailed—unjustly, of course!—brethren. As fashions will, this fashion has been taken to extremes, so that is now common to see pants worn with the waistband below glute level, exposing several inches of (usually) colorful underwear. Now a back-

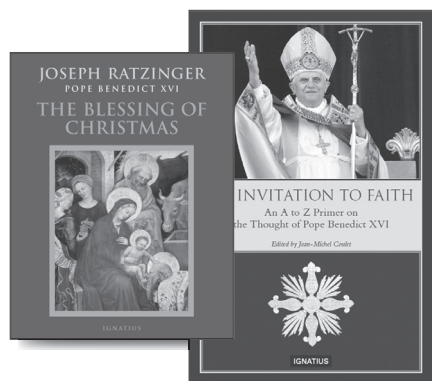
lash is developing, with town ordinances being passed to prohibit this unsightly fashion. Louisiana has led the way. In Delcambre, that exposed underwear will get you a \$500 fine and up to six months in the slammer. The interesting thing is that much of the pull-up-your-pants legislation is being pushed by black lawmakers, who cannot see what honor accrues from the emulation of jailbirds. Black "spokesmen" are of course on the other side. Former NAACP director Benjamin Chavis has vowed a court challenge and called for a root causes approach: "The focus should be on cleaning up the social conditions that the sagging pants comes out of . . ." The courts await. Let's hope nobody ends up in jail.

■ The list of nations and peoples claiming to have beaten Chris Columbus to the discovery of the New World is already quite long: The Chinese, the Polynesians, the Vikings, the Irish, and the Welsh all say they were here first. In the current geopolitical climate it is not very surprising to see Muslims getting in on the act. One Hisham Zoubeir, writing in the British journal *Muslim Weekly*, says that his co-religionists crossed the Atlantic 603 years before Columbus (who, writes Mr. Zoubeir, reported seeing a mosque on the coast of Cuba). What did these Muslims do in the New World? "Unlike Columbus, they had not come to enslave the populations or plunder the land." Heaven forbid anyone should think so! "They had come to trade and they married among the Natives." Of course they did.

■ In unusually cheering news from the strange little world of ethnic apologizing, the Tolai tribesmen of Papua New Guinea have expressed formal regret for having killed, cooked, and eaten four missionaries back in 1878. The missionaries were Fijian Methodists under the direction of the indefatigable Rev. George Brown of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Led by the governor-general of Papua New Guinea (himself a Tolai), thousands of villagers gathered to offer their apologies to Britain's Fijian High Commissioner (i.e., ambassador), and to listen to eulogies of Reverend Brown. At press time, the issue of reparations had not yet been raised.

■ Was it the biggest upset in the history of college football? Probably. On the first day of September, the Appalachian State Mountaineers beat the University of Michigan Wolverines. What was the big deal? Michigan is one of the best and most storied football programs ever; before facing Appalachian State, they were ranked No. 5 in the nation. And the Mountaineers? The team from Boone, N.C., is a powerhouse in what you might call minor-league college football: but it is still minor-league football. Appalachian State vs. Michigan was David against Goliath. And when David won, 34–32, the entire nation paid attention. This victory was on page A-1 of newspapers from Maine to California. And in that game, we relearned some old lessons: about hunger and desire; about the danger of complacency; about the unpredictability, and magic, of sports. "On any given Sunday . . .," goes the phrase. The same applies to Saturday. The morning after the Great Upset, Kenneth Peacock, Appalachian State's chancellor, had a message for his pastor: He said that, if his earthly days had expired late Saturday afternoon, he would have been ready. "I had one foot in glory land anyway. It would have been an easy thing to do."

INSPIRATION FROM POPE BENEDICT XVI



THE BLESSING OF CHRISTMAS *Meditations for the Season*

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)

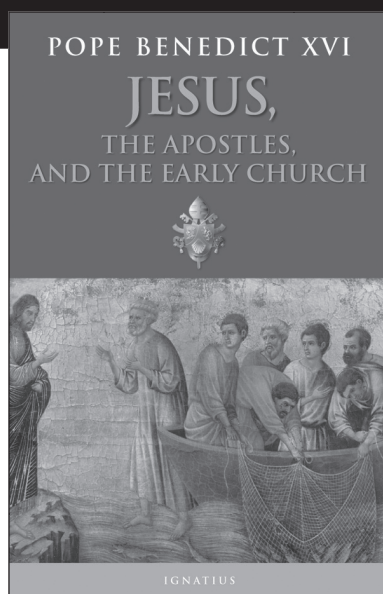
This lovely book, profusely illustrated, is ideal for the Christmas and Advent season with its profound, yet popular meditations by the Pope on the blessings of the season. These beautiful meditations by the acclaimed spiritual teacher give his fresh insights into the deeper meaning of this most wondrous event, and show the Pope to be a man who knows how to address the mind and the heart. Lavishly illustrated throughout with classic color art. *Silk Ribbon marker.*

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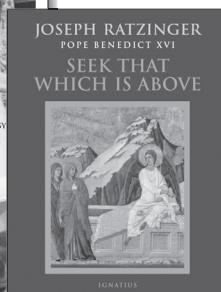
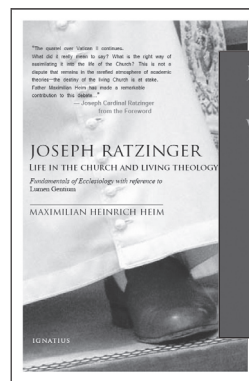
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I. Facts on the Ground

A YEAR ago today, we were losing the Iraq War. The Democrats won an election based largely on discontent with the war's conduct, and it looked like public support was on a long, terminal slide. Now, we have made real progress on the ground in Iraq, and the domestic politics of the war are turning around as well.

The key has been the introduction of a classic counterinsurgency strategy and the addition of enough troops to apply it with some consistency under the leadership of Gen. David Petraeus. This has led to an amazing turnaround in some of the most embattled areas of Iraq. Last year, the chief of intelligence for the Marine Corps in Iraq filed a report saying (according to the *Washington Post*) that "prospects for securing that country's western Anbar province are dim and that there is almost nothing the U.S. military can do to improve the political and social situation there." The report also said—again in the words of the *Post*—that an absence of functioning government institutions had left "a vacuum that has been filled by the insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq, which has become the province's most significant political force." In short: We had lost Anbar to al-Qaeda.

Today, al-Qaeda has nearly been routed from Anbar. Its campaign of intimidation, forced marriages, and repressive Islamism backfired. It repelled Sunni tribes by assassinating their leaders and threatening their way of life (by attacking such things as smoking and drinking). The tribes flipped to our side against al-Qaeda, and the correlation of forces shifted decisively.

In the provincial capital of Ramadi there were as many as 30–35 attacks a day around the beginning of the year. Of the days since April, 102 have been without attacks. June 2006 saw 450 attacks against U.S. forces; this June there were fewer than 25. In his surprise Labor Day visit to Iraq, President Bush chose an airfield outside Ramadi for a meeting of his war leaders and the Iraqi government—something inconceivable six months ago.

This represents an amazing success. Even top Democrats like Hillary Clinton are willing to acknowledge it. But liberals try to explain it away by suggesting that the turn of the Sunni tribes is a localized phenomenon in one province; that the progress in Anbar began prior to the surge's inception; that the surge focused on Baghdad, not Anbar; and, finally, that the tribes would be fighting and beating al-Qaeda without us. They are wrong on all counts.

Iraq is a heavily tribal society; 85 percent of the country claims a tribal affiliation. The posture of the tribes is thus important, and their revolt in Anbar has demonstrated to tribes elsewhere that beating al-Qaeda is possible and that allying with Americans has benefits. The turnaround in Anbar—the largest province in Iraq by area—has spread to other provinces, including Diyala, Babil, Ninewa, Salah-ad-Din, and parts of Baghdad. Counterinsurgency expert Dave Kilcullen, who just finished a stint working with Petraeus in Baghdad, has called the change in Anbar "a major social movement that could significantly influence most Iraqis where they live."

It is true that the tribes in Anbar were disillusioned with al-Qaeda prior to the surge in 2006. But they weren't able to defend themselves against the terrorists' depredations. That is why their change in allegiance happened in the slipstream of American combat power. We began clear-and-hold operations in Anbar in 2006 by pushing into the center of Ramadi, but we didn't have enough troops to do the job. The surge slated three additional battalions for Anbar, and in early 2007 we were able to begin a more effective push to clear and hold with additional troops. It was then that the tribal revolt began to take root and spread.

The tribesmen may indeed want to fight al-Qaeda on their own, but they can't do it effectively without us. *New York Times* reporter Michael Gordon recounts how Baquba, the capital of Diyala Province, fell to the militants in 2005 when we drew down forces "in the hopes of shifting most of the responsibility for securing the region onto the Iraqis." When this spring we showed up in force again, "the residents saw an opportunity to challenge al-Qaeda, and for a week, the two sides battled it out



Petraeus and Bush in Anbar

in the streets.” The militants had the upper hand in this fight—until we intervened. That, in microcosm, is the dynamic throughout Iraq.

All this sometimes gets dismissed as “arming the Sunnis” for the next phase of the civil war against the Shiite government. But the notion that anyone needs arming in Iraq, a country bristling with guns, is absurd. Rather, we are funding the tribes and recruiting tribesmen for the Iraqi army and police. We have created the equivalent of neighborhood watch groups at the local level, but we are not creating Sunni militias. We are logging everyone we newly integrate into the security forces with fingerprints and retinal scans, and we are taking down the serial numbers of their weapons. That means we know whom we are working with. We can’t guarantee that these fighters won’t shift allegiance again, but we can come looking for them (and their tribal leaders) if they do.

The army and police, of course, are overwhelmingly Shiite institutions, so Sunni fighters’ joining them is hardly a step toward renewed civil war. The turn of the Sunni tribes has occurred not just in Sunni areas—as war critics claim—but in mixed Sunni-Shiite areas, and in tribes that are themselves mixed. The price of cooperation with the U.S. is always an end to sectarian fighting. This bottom-up

dynamic in Fallujah, Ramadi, and Baquba, places that once were synonymous with disorder.

II. The Benchmarks

CRITICS of the war dismiss any reduction in violence as mere “military progress” and focus instead on the “benchmarks” for major Iraqi legislation that were set at the inception of the surge. These benchmarks were meant to gauge political progress of the sort necessary to pacifying the country and reconciling the Sunnis to the Shiite government. But they are not the only measure of progress, or even the best one.

The turn of the Sunni tribes is itself political progress, and it is much more important, for the time being, than the benchmarks. If we had had a choice at the beginning of the year between legislative accomplishments in the Iraqi parliament or Sunnis’ peeling away from the insurgency, we surely would have taken the latter. Indeed, the latter is the effect that we hoped the legislative benchmarks would achieve, by convincing the Sunnis of the central government’s fairness.

Iraq’s problems are bigger than Maliki, and it isn’t fair to attribute them all to him. A replacement could prove no better, or worse.

reconciliation is a significant cooling off of the civil war that convulsed the country in 2006.

So is the decline in sectarian murders, most of which have been Shiite-on-Sunni and the work of Shiite militias. In August, according to Petraeus, sectarian killings in Baghdad were a quarter of what they had been at their peak. The surge’s intense focus on Baghdad pushed some of the violence out to the periphery of the country—not an ideal result, but the capital is more important. It is disgusting that al-Qaeda could recently kill 500 Yazidi, a tiny sect, by detonating truck bombs near the Syrian border; but it is also a sign that Qaeda terrorists are having a harder time operating in Baghdad. Surely they would have preferred to kill Shiites in Iraq’s capital if they could have managed it.

General Petraeus cites other indices of success: The number of weapons caches discovered doubled from 1,977 in January to 4,141 in August, and IED attacks had, at the end of August, declined during “eight of the last eleven weeks to the lowest in at least a year, Iraq-wide.” The security we have been able to deliver in fits and starts to the population has emboldened it to cooperate with us and provide intelligence tips. Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch has explained how it works in his area south of Baghdad: “When we go out there, the first question they ask is, ‘Are you staying?’ And the second question is, ‘How can we help?’”

Prior to the surge and its focus on securing the population, the answer to the first question was always no, so the second question was never asked. Now it is, and it has changed the

This doesn’t mean that benchmarks such as a law to distribute Iraq’s oil revenues equitably aren’t important. The dysfunction in the central government—the inability to pass important legislation, the political influence brought to bear on Iraqi military operations, the corruption in the ministries—is disturbing. It has become a commonplace to dump on Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, whose deficiencies are obvious. If he continues to perform poorly, he will likely be replaced through the Iraqi political process.

But Iraq’s problems are bigger than Maliki, and it isn’t fair to attribute them all to him. A replacement could prove no better, or worse. Maliki is less pro-Iranian than other Iraqi politicians. He has broken with the Iranian proxy and anti-American thug Moqtada al-Sadr, and seems to have realized that the Iranians and Sadrists are out to kill him, which is the unmistakable message from mortars and rockets launched at his offices in the Green Zone.

Maliki has now formed a four-party coalition that includes his own Dawa party and the other main Shiite party, the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, as well as the two Kurdish parties. This coalition has enough votes to pass legislation in parliament, and it pointedly excludes Sadr. As politicians in the U.S. complained about the parliament’s August recess, the party leaders—the only players who really matter—were hard at work forging a deal on de-Baathification, a high-profile benchmark. Whether it becomes law remains to be seen, but the top reaches of Iraqi politics are still functioning.

One reason for the parliamentary deadlock is Sunni recalcitrance in Baghdad. The Sunni representatives in Baghdad were elected when basically all Sunnis supported the insurgency. These members of parliament may no longer represent sentiment in the Sunni heartland, where a consciousness of defeat—that is, a realization that the civil war has gone badly for the Sunnis, and that they won't govern the country again anytime soon—may finally have taken hold. New elections will be held in 2009, and may take place sooner. It's possible that they will empower a more pragmatic and representative generation of Sunni leaders.

In any case, what constitutes political progress in Iraq is too messy and unpredictable to conform to Washington timetables. Take the recent crisis in Karbala. Sadrist—likely backed by the Iranians—fomented violence during the Shiite pilgrimage to that city in order to embarrass the local government. Maliki handled the challenge well enough that Sadr emerged from the confrontation pledging (probably insincerely) to order his militia to stand down for six months. If we are to check Iranian ambitions in Iraq, sidelining Sadr is essential (and with the surge, we have been picking off key figures in his militia). The Karbala episode, then, was important—even if no one would have thought to include it on a congressional checklist.

Maliki deployed Iraqi security forces to Karbala, and those forces are another point of contention in the debate over the war. Critics harp on the slow development of the Iraqi army. It is true that few Iraqi army battalions—roughly half a dozen at the last count—are able to operate independently. But they don't have to operate independently as long as we are there. What's important is that they take on more and more of the fight, which they are. Gen. Raymond Odierno said in an August 17 press briefing, "I cannot recall for you the last report of an ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] unit avoiding a fight."

There are 300,000 members of the Iraqi army and police forces combined. Sectarianism is a major problem, especially in the police, which have been infiltrated by the Shiite militias and require reform (again). But the ISF have improved. Our latest National Intelligence Estimate—a consensus assessment—says, "Iraqi Security Forces involved in combined operations with Coalition forces have performed adequately, and some units have demonstrated increasing professional competence." Discussing their role in the surge into Baghdad, it notes, "The deployment of ISF units from throughout Iraq to Baghdad in support of security operations known as Operation *Fardh al-Qanun* marks significant progress since last year when large groups of soldiers deserted rather than depart their home areas."

Liberal opponents of the war want to have it both ways. They disparage the Iraqi army by arguing that the American training effort is failing. Then, in the same breath, they say we can pull out and avoid dire strategic and humanitarian consequences

since the Iraqi forces will step into the gap. These propositions can't both be true, and in fact both are false: The Iraqi forces are improving, but aren't capable of replacing us on the battlefield.

Critics of the war also like to pretend the progress we've seen in Iraq this year is sheer luck—it's just a happy coincidence that all of it has come at the same time as the surge and the adoption of better counterinsurgency tactics. This is nonsense. As the National Intelligence Estimate states, "there have been measurable but uneven improvements in Iraq's security situation since our last National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq in January 2007." It warns, "We assess that changing the mission of Coalition forces from a primarily counterinsurgency and stabilization role to a primary combat support role for Iraqi forces and counterterrorist operations to prevent AQI [al-Qaeda in Iraq] from establishing a safehaven would erode security gains achieved thus far."

This is the choice: either to allow Iraq to revert to its condition in 2006

or something worse, or to continue with the surge. Some Democrats and Republicans persist nonetheless in seeking a phantom middle way.



Maliki and Shiite delegates in Karbala

III. The Compromise Illusion

COMPROMISE proposals, taking a page from the Iraq Study Group recommendations last year, focus on ending the U.S. combat role in Iraq. The stated goals of such proposals are to stop the U.S. from policing a civil war; to force the Iraqi government to take responsibility for itself; and to focus on counterterrorism, training the Iraqis, and increasing U.S. diplomacy in the region. These goals—worthy enough in theory—would not be served by the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq.

Saying that we shouldn't be in the middle of a civil war is a politically effective soundbite. But beating back the sectarian violence is strategically important to us. Fomenting civil war is a key goal of al-Qaeda, because war undermines the central government and drives desperate Sunnis into al-Qaeda's arms. The Shiite militias, for their part, are happy to have the government discredited and the Sunnis radicalized, because it makes them the only bulwark to protect the Shiite population. Civil war thus helps the extremists on both sides, and makes it harder for us to counter both al-Qaeda and the Iranian-backed Sadrists.

The Iraqi government is not going to operate effectively if a brutal civil war burns on unconstrained by us. If we were to end our combat role, whatever political leverage we have now would evaporate as the Iraqi government began to prepare for

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our departure, bending to the dictates of the goons with guns who have always filled the security vacuums we have created. Ending our combat role, far from being a precondition of political progress, would bring about a deterioration of the political conditions.

Even as American politicians calling for withdrawal say they're against intervening in a civil war, they profess to be in favor of counterterrorism. But what we are engaged in right now with the surge is largely a counterterrorism operation. Since al-Qaeda is waging a terrorist insurgency in Iraq, the only way to combat it effectively is with classic manpower-intensive counterinsurgency operations that involve securing the population and winning its trust and cooperation.

Advocates of withdrawal would jettison this effort in favor of counterterrorism from afar. But the farther removed we were from the battle, the better our intelligence would have to be in order for us to be effective. In practice, however, our intelligence would get worse: Iraqis give us tips only when they feel safe enough to do so. Besides which, al-Qaeda in Iraq does not establish large bases susceptible to attacks from a distance, preferring instead to embed themselves in the population. They are not building training installations in remote parts of the country, as al-Qaeda did in Afghanistan prior to 9/11. Even then, the Clinton policy of "targeted counterterrorism operations"—i.e., the occasional cruise-missile strike—was an abject failure.

Saying that we will focus on training after we withdraw combat troops is just as dubious. Our trainers in Iraq are dependent on combat troops for the support structure, force protection, and

which it undeniably does. A force that was too small for the post-9/11 world was thrown into a counterinsurgency war in Iraq and spent years operating under a flawed strategy. Despite that, our troops have performed marvelously, and have now shown what they can do with generals who understand how to fight an insurgency.

It is true that, without extended tours or more National Guard call-ups, the surge will have to begin receding sometime next year. That, however, is no reason to begin ending it prematurely this year, before we have had a chance to consolidate and build on our gains. Our volunteer force depends heavily on morale; advocates of withdrawal would be doing it no favors by ensuring its first defeat in history.

IV. The National Interest

YOU don't have to believe in aggressive democracy promotion to realize that winning the war is in our strategic interest. We are in a fight now to establish a stable ally in a strategically vital region of the world.

Even the most hard-bitten realists should favor that. We are also fighting to keep al-Qaeda from establishing a safe haven in Iraq—a goal everyone on the right and the left professes to support—and to keep Iran from taking over Iraq as it imposes its hegemonic designs on the region. By any standard, preventing these outcomes is in our interest.

Ending our combat role, far from being a precondition of political progress, would bring about a deterioration of the political conditions.

rapid-reaction capability that they provide. These combat troops can't be pulled out without debilitating the training mission. Also, as a practical matter, working alongside our combat troops is excellent training for the Iraqis. Our push into Baghdad as part of the surge has, according to *USA Today's* reporting, "improved the proficiency of Iraqi soldiers." If we end combat operations and uncontrolled sectarian violence ensues, the Iraqi army will be torn apart at the seams.

As for diplomacy, there is no reason a withdrawal of combat troops would facilitate it. When advocates of withdrawal call for increased diplomacy, they really mean talking to Syria and Iran. But Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, has already had meetings with Iranian diplomats. Those meetings went nowhere because Iran is interested in frustrating our ambitions in Iraq and killing our soldiers, not in helping us establish security on our terms. Meanwhile, we have been engaged in Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, and have been forging closer ties with our allies in the Gulf in response to the growing Iranian threat. Losing the war—as those who call for withdrawal are effectively advocating—would diminish our diplomatic leverage in the region for a long time to come.

Critics of the war often argue that it strains the U.S. military,

John McCain likes to say that the terrorists in Iraq will "follow us home" if we leave. That may not be true in the literal sense that they will move to New York. But if we retreat in the face of al-Qaeda's campaign of suicide bombings, we will have enhanced the terror group's prestige and vindicated its signature tactic, for it will have used that tactic to vanquish the world's lone superpower.

There is much talk of the Iraq War as a "terrorist recruiting tool." Our defeat would be an even more powerful recruiting tool. It is true that our presence in Iraq is a cause against which Islamic extremists can rally, but that need only be a temporary effect if we succeed in helping the Iraqis reject al-Qaeda and force it from their midst. Al-Qaeda began life with the ambition of toppling corrupt Arab governments before it decided to start attacking the West; now it is involved in the daily slaughter of Muslims in Iraq, and not just the supposedly infidel Shiites, but the Sunnis who resist it. The Iraq War thus has the potential to become an enormously discrediting enterprise for al-Qaeda—so long as it loses. Throughout recorded history, nothing has so enhanced a ruler or a movement as military victory, and nothing has proved so diminishing as defeat. Dealing a major defeat to al-Qaeda in Iraq is now entirely possible.



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Over the long run, the Middle East will travel down one of two trajectories: Either it will embrace the extremisms of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Osama bin Laden, favoring sharia-law states and the extirpation of all Western influence, or it will accept the idea of an open society that is integrated with the global economic system, reasonably respectful of human rights, and willing to circumscribe religious authority in matters of governance and statecraft.

The Middle East's *ancien régime*—autarchic states that are both secular and illiberal—is locked in a death struggle with both Islamists (witness the Salafist hatred of the House of Saud) and progressives (witness the regular student and worker protests that destabilize Iran). In one important case—Iran—the extremists won themselves a regime. So it was in Afghanistan, too, until American intervention replaced the Taliban with a highly imperfect but surprisingly resilient democracy.

Iraq matters in this struggle. Make no mistake: The Islamists are watching, the progressives are watching, and millions of Muslims aligned with neither side are watching too. Yes, the U.S. has been disappointed in its hopes of constructing a stable, model democracy. But the collapse of the inchoate Iraqi state would come at a cost to liberalization in the broader Middle East. It would be taken by the Islamists and their sympathizers as decisive refutation of the liberal alternative. Even a qualified success in Iraq, on the other hand, would be a blow to the Islamist worldview.

V. The Moral Case

THE self-interested reasons to win in Iraq are enough to justify sticking with the surge. But there are compelling moral considerations as well. In almost any other circumstance, many on the left would find these reasons sufficient in their own right to continue our intervention.

Without us, there would be more suicide bombings against Shiite targets, ripping apart markets, mosques, and children standing in line to get candy. There would be more Shiite death-squad killings, with innocent Sunnis abducted, tortured, murdered, and dumped on the streets. The ethnic cleansing already underway would accelerate, and the refugee crisis—2 million Iraqis have fled the country, and 2 million more are displaced internally—would worsen.

Forthright opponents of the war admit that a humanitarian catastrophe would follow our pullout. The *New York Times* editorial page recently conceded that American withdrawal might bring “reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide.” Instead of

summoning a ringing call of “never again,” the *Times* shrugs all this off as the unfortunate price of withdrawal.

Barack Obama has explained that we needn't worry overmuch about genocide in Iraq since we don't do much to stop it in Africa. As a moral principle, this is perverse. It doesn't follow from our inability to stop *all* genocides that we shouldn't stop them when and where we can—especially in a case where stopping mass slaughter doesn't require new intervention, but simply the continuation of what we are already doing.

We also have a special obligation to Iraq. Unlike in Somalia or Kosovo, where we intervened on humanitarian grounds, we played a direct causal role in bringing about this maelstrom. Yes, Saddam Hussein did much to ruin Iraq, and the country might have fallen apart someday regardless (upon his death or overthrow, for instance). But America picked the day. The Iraqis have paid an enormous price in their struggle to found a new state—and they have paid it at our instigation. Our national honor is therefore implicated. This consideration alone would not justify the cost in blood

and treasure that the war extracts, but it is another weight on the scales in favor of finishing what we started.



Patrolling south of Baghdad

VI. One Imperative

THERE is no denying that we have made grave mistakes in Iraq, mistakes for which we are still paying. Even now, we confront a harrowingly difficult task, and could well fail. As the National Intelligence Estimate puts it, “the level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remains high; Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled; AQI retains the ability to conduct high-profile attacks; and to date, Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively.” Even if we ultimately succeed, Iraq will be a basket case for years. Our original expectations of the war have had to be scaled back after collision with our failings as occupiers and with the relatively primitive state of Iraqi society (especially now that so much of the educated middle class has fled).

But we are where we are. Looking backward is useful—necessary, even—as an analytical exercise. It cannot, however, substitute for a strategy that takes account of changing conditions in a fluid war. For too long, supporters of the war were trapped in their assumptions of progress in Iraq, even as reality belied those assumptions. Now, critics of the war are caught in the same position, trying to ignore or diminish successes rather than reexamine their defeatist views. This war can still be won, but only if we have the nerve and the patience to see it through. Recent events on the ground, strategic interest, and morality all point to only one imperative: Stay.

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The Individualist

Congressman Ron Paul, once the Libertarians' standard-bearer, runs for the GOP presidential nomination

JOHN J. MILLER

ON the Fourth of July, thousands gathered on fields by the Iowa State football stadium, spread out their blankets, and waited for a fireworks show to begin. Around twilight, a minivan started circling the crowd, carrying a well-lit sign that advertised the long-shot presidential campaign of Texas congressman Ron Paul. "Everybody noticed, so it seemed like a nice idea, a clever move," says a local resident who was there. A few minutes later, another Paul vehicle appeared. Then a third. "They just kept driving back and forth. It got to be too much. People started murmuring and laughing—it was definitely overkill."

Paul's quixotic quest for the GOP nomination is based upon the hope that Republican primary voters will respond in an altogether different way: The more they come to know him, the more they'll come to like him. Up to now, he has yet to register above 2 or 3 in any public-opinion poll. Yet his campaign has shown some surprising signs of life. "Everything's going better than expected," he says. "Clinton and Carter also were unknown the summer before their nominations."

Paul finished fifth in August's bally-

hooded Iowa Straw Poll, but he has won several lesser contests in different venues, such as Allegheny County, Pa., Stafford County, N.H., and the West Alabama Republican Assembly in Tuscaloosa. He isn't flush with cash, but he recently had more money in the bank than John McCain, according to Federal Election Commission filings. His hard-core supporters have gained a reputation for their web-savvy enthusiasm.

Can Paul emerge from the pack of GOP also-rans and begin to nip at the heels of the frontrunners? Perhaps conservatives, wanting to renew their first principles, will find themselves attracted to his rock-solid opposition to the growth of government. Maybe a few are primed to hear his harsh criticism of the war in Iraq, which he opposed before the first bombs fell on Baghdad. But are they willing to go so far out on a fringe as to support a guy who didn't even vote for his own party's nominee, George W. Bush, in 2000 or 2004? For that to happen, Republican unease with the president would have to transform into open revolt. It may turn out that the more conservatives learn about the idiosyncratic Paul, the more they'll be glad that there's precisely one of him in

Congress—and that other Republican candidates stand a much better chance of becoming the next president.

The 72-year-old Paul is arguably the most successful libertarian politician in America. The biography on his 2008 campaign website doesn't say so, but he was actually the Libertarian party's candidate for president in 1988. He carried less than one half of 1 percent of the popular vote. In 1991, he started to lay the groundwork for a presidential bid within the GOP, but he dropped out when Pat Buchanan jumped in.

Each of Paul's political victories has come as a Republican. Despite his failures on the national stage, he has in fact demonstrated a remarkable durability over the years, winning election to the House ten times across four decades. His congressional career began in 1976, went on hiatus after a Senate primary defeat in 1984 (Phil Gramm trounced him), and resumed with his election once again in 1996. He's almost certainly the only member of Congress to display a picture of the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises in his office.

Paul was born in Pittsburgh and attended medical school at Duke. In 1962, he received an Army draft notice, prompting him to volunteer for the Air Force as a flight surgeon. He eventually settled in coastal Texas—"My wife and I were looking for a warm climate"—and became an obstetrician in private practice. Many politicians like to kiss babies; Paul has actually delivered some 4,000 of them.

During the 1960s, Paul received his first exposure to the ideas of classical liberalism. "I was in a conservative book club, reading *The Road to Serfdom* by Hayek and the novels of Ayn Rand," he says. The work of Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education also influenced him.

As a member of Congress, he has tried to stay true to the principles of these groups and intellectuals. In the process, he has developed one of the most singular voting records in Washington. His nickname is "Dr. No" because he so frequently opposes legislation that just about every one of his colleagues supports. A resolution to honor Rosa Parks? No. A condemnation of the Sudanese government? No. A demand that Vietnam release political prisoners? No.

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whether something is authorized by the Constitution,” he says. “If it isn’t, then I vote against it.” Some consider this an exercise in high principle. “On limited government, he’s the yardstick by which the rest of us can judge ourselves,” says Jeff Flake, a congressman from Arizona. Others see it as foolish: His voting record is a golden opportunity for attack-ad specialists to exploit.

In reality, it may be a combination of the two, as Paul has made a career of letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. His lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union is 82.3 percent—a decent mark, but hardly hall-of-fame stuff. His score suffers every time he opposes a measure that most mainstream conservatives support, such as tariff-lowering trade deals. “I’m absolutely for free trade, more so than any other member of the House,” he boasts. “But I’m against managed trade.” The result is a record that is indistinguishable from that of a left-wing protectionist. The Central American Free Trade Agreement? No. The Australia Free Trade Agreement? No. Presidential trade-promotion authority? No.

It may comfort Paul to believe that nothing blemishes his ideological spotlessness, but many conservative reformers regard him as an obstacle. Last year, Congress considered legislation to slow the growth of entitlements by \$40 billion over five years. Democrats portrayed it as a ruthless attack on social services. Every one of them voted against it, and a handful of liberal Republicans joined them. So did Paul. The bill just didn’t meet his standard of libertarian purity, apparently because it didn’t bring the growth of government to a screeching halt. It passed by a single vote. “We all admire his principles,” says one GOP staffer. “But he just isn’t a strategic thinker.”

A strategic thinker is able to make tough choices, plus a few that aren’t so tough. Asked whether he voted for Bush in 2004, Paul says no: “He misled us in 2000, when he talked about a humble foreign policy.” So did he vote for Bush in 2000? “I didn’t vote for him then, either. I wasn’t convinced he was a conservative.” So whom did he vote for? “I’m not saying. It doesn’t matter.” Confronted by a couple of decisions that didn’t strike many conservatives as close calls—Bush versus John Kerry, and Bush versus Al Gore—Paul evidently

chose to opt out. It must have been the principled thing to do.

There’s been no shortage of principle with respect to his views on the Bush administration’s foreign policy. Apart from a post-9/11 vote authorizing the use of force in Afghanistan, he’s been against virtually every aspect of it. “We should be following the Founders—no entangling alliances,” he says. He would bring U.S. troops home from Iraq and just about everywhere else, permit trade with Cuba, and lift sanctions on Iran. “I’m not an isolationist,” he says. “The real problem is the neo-isolationists—the people who are making us everybody’s enemy.”

Lines like that led to the one moment when Paul had a tangible effect on the presidential race. At the GOP debate in South Carolina in May, Paul blamed the terrorism of 9/11 on U.S. interventionism—“because we’ve been over there, we’ve been bombing Iraq for ten years.” Then Rudy Giuliani chimed in: “That’s an extraordinary statement, as someone who lived through the attack of September 11th: that we invited the attack because we were attacking Iraq. I don’t think I’ve heard that before, and I’ve heard some pretty absurd explanations for September 11th.” The audience wildly cheered Giuliani in what was perhaps the most electric moment of the GOP race to date. When pressed by Giuliani to withdraw his comment, Paul doubled down: “I’m suggesting that we listen to the people who attacked us. They come and they attack us because we’re over there.”

A more adept anti-war candidate probably wouldn’t have let Giuliani turn the tables so effectively. He might even discomfort the hawkish frontrunners, putting them on the defensive whenever they discuss foreign policy and the military. Paul’s views on 9/11 aren’t as cockamamie as they sound at first blush—Osama bin Laden, after all, repeatedly has identified American involvement in the Middle East as an incitement. Whether that obliges America’s disengagement from the world is another matter. Whatever the case, Paul’s fundamental achievement so far has been to energize supporters of the war. He makes Giuliani’s views seem sensible and his own merely an exotic sub-species of blame-America-first pacifism.

It’s hard to see why conservatives would ever say yes to Dr. No.

NR

■ PUBLIC POLICY

Motherhood Before Marriage

An American credo to ponder

KATE O’BEIRNE

YOUNG women who idealize marriage, fiercely disapprove of divorce, and eagerly embrace the self-denying demands of motherhood might be thought a welcome antidote to the breakdown of the American family. But some young women who hold just these attitudes are responsible for what William F. Buckley Jr. calls “the single greatest problem in America.” That problem is illegitimacy.

A fascinating, in-depth study published in 2005—*Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*—explores the views of low-income single mothers whose children are illegitimate. Its insights on out-of-wedlock births shatter the paradigms of poverty warriors left and right.

The harmful effects of growing up without a father in the home are depressingly well documented. Children raised in single-parent homes are more likely than children raised in intact families to have emotional and behavioral problems, to engage in crime, to fail in school, to abuse drugs, and to be on welfare as adults. The recent Census Bureau report measuring the 2006 poverty rate reminds us that, if poor mothers married the fathers of their children, the number of poor children would be reduced by over two-thirds. Over a third of all American children are born out of wedlock, and illegitimacy rates in low-income communities are more than twice the national average.

A range of supposed root causes has been offered to explain illegitimacy. Many conservatives fault the perverse incentives of welfare programs, which subsidize destructive behavior. Some of these conservatives advocate the restructuring

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of government aid around different, positive incentives. Others believe that desperate straits would compel smarter, self-interested behavior on the part of welfare recipients, and so make the politically futile argument that all welfare should be ended. Supporters of abstinence education hope to reduce the number of out-of-wedlock births by discouraging sexual activity among young people wholly unready for parenthood.

Liberals who discount the role of fathers would make single-mother households more economically viable by boosting welfare payments. Some liberals think more job-training programs would increase the number of marriageable men in poor neighborhoods. Most liberals agree that greater access to family-planning services and birth control would reduce illegitimacy.

But none of these theories satisfactorily answers the most fundamental question: Why do extremely disadvantaged single young women have children they cannot raise successfully, thereby damaging their prospects?

The authors of *Promises I Can Keep* give answers that are both original and credible. (Their work was first called to my attention by the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector, the most informed poverty expert I know.) Kathryn Edin, a University of Pennsylvania professor, and Maria Kefalas, a professor at St. Joseph's University (also in Philadelphia), spent a few years developing relationships with about 160 single mothers in eight poor neighborhoods in Philadelphia and Camden, N.J. Their study group included blacks, whites, and Hispanics. About half of the mothers, whose average age was 25, had not graduated from high school. Three-quarters had had their first child as a teenager. Most were dependent on welfare, and fewer than half were employed. They were among the most disadvantaged of America's single mothers.

Edin and Kefalas hoped to learn what caused the "dramatic break" between marriage and childbearing among the poor. What they learned was how poorly we understand the poor. Where outsiders see self-defeating behavior with wholly unfortunate consequences, these hopeful young mothers see purpose and redemption.



The young, low-income single mothers in the study have no regrets about their decisions. They prize both marriage and motherhood—but not in that order. They have placed the bar for the former extremely high and the bar for the latter alarmingly low.

The institution of marriage is so highly valued by these mothers that it has become an ideal perennially deferred to the future. "I don't believe in divorce, that's why none of the women in my family are married," one single mother explains. They hope to be married one day, when they have found a suitable mate and can expect a lifelong commitment. But they are unwilling to postpone childbearing until they find that sure bet.

They also see their children as essential to their lives. Children are the most important accomplishment within their reach and the chief source of their identity. The love of a child is the one relationship they can count on to last. One woman who became a mother at only 14 explains, "I never felt my daughter held me back from anything. . . . She taught me how to be responsible and mature." Poor single mothers contemplate life without their children and imagine being "dead," "in jail," "messed up on drugs," or "nowhere at all."

Romantic relationships proceed at lightning speed, and it is high praise when a boyfriend declares, "I want to have a baby with you." Pregnancies are more likely to be planned than accidental. Facing an unwelcome pregnancy, such mothers are less likely than more affluent teenagers to choose abortion, because they disapprove of shirking responsibility. Adoption is generally out of the question because it would mean giving away "your own flesh and blood." And abstinence education misses the mark when the target audience longs impatiently for motherhood.

Unemployment is not especially likely to break up a child's relationship with his father, since these young women—eager to have children and confident in their ability to raise them alone—tend not to be looking for a breadwinner. (Infidelity, on the other hand, frequently ends relationships.) The

mothers are surrounded by role models "who have succeeded in doing well by their children, ensuring that they're clean, clothed, housed, fed, and loved." Unlike middle-class parents, they can't assume that they will be able to provide the bare necessities to their children, so they take pride in meeting a standard that emphasizes survival over achievement. Edin and Kefalas explain, "The well-dressed child transforms the shabbily dressed mother." Managing to raise and care for a child as a single parent wins respect. And because these mothers consider "being there" the most important tenet of good mothering, they judge themselves successful even when their children fail in school, get pregnant as teenagers, or wind up on drugs or in juvenile detention.

The high incidence of illegitimacy in poor communities won't be reduced as long as disadvantaged young women see marriage as a luxury and children as a necessity. Unfortunately, it takes much more than the creation or adjustment of a welfare program to change attitudes that seem rational to a young woman based on her experience and environment. Without a better understanding of "the single greatest problem in America," we have little hope of improving the lives of poor single mothers and their children.

NR

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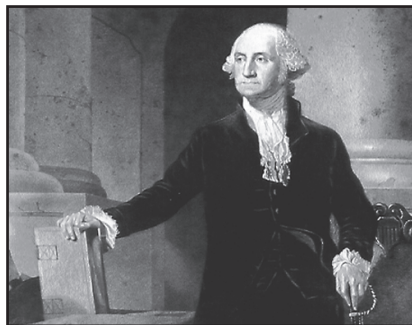
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About Your Professor

Professor J. Rufus Fears is David Ross Boyd Professor of Classics at the University of Oklahoma. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University and has written four books

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■ AT WAR

Awakened Ghosts

President Bush reopens the subject of Vietnam

JAMES S. ROBBINS

THE United States has not respected its promises. It is inhumane. It is untrustworthy. It is irresponsible.”

These words were spoken by South Vietnamese president Nguyen Van Thieu in his resignation speech on April 21, 1975. Over the previous seven weeks, the North Vietnamese army had overrun most of his country, in open violation of the 1973 Paris peace agreement. The United States, saddled with an anti-war Congress and a vacillating president, did nothing. Nine days later, Communist forces occupied Saigon, after the few remaining American troops and civilians ignominiously fled.

There was some chortling among President Bush’s critics when he made reference to the defeat in Vietnam in his speech to the VFW on August 22. The administration had been loath to draw analogies to that war, a practice that has been a rhetorical staple of Iraq War critics. His comments were cast as something of a retreat.

But this was no generic “quagmire” reference, nor is this a semantic debate. The president was reminding us that the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam by choice, by failing to live up to its obligations. Lack of will, not insufficient military power, ensured the subjugation of the South Vietnamese. As the president noted, our defeat in Vietnam is central to al-Qaeda’s understanding of the American way of war. In their view we have no staying

Mr. Robbins is director of the Intelligence Center at Trinity Washington University. He is writing a book on the Tet Offensive.

power, and will throw our allies to the wolves when it suits us. The insurgents and their state sponsors seek to wear us down and wait us out, just as the North Vietnamese did.

Unfortunately, President Thieu’s assessment of the United States was correct, and Iraqi leaders should note it well. Prime minister Nouri al-Maliki must find it frustrating that the U.S. dictates specific and difficult political benchmarks for his country when he cannot be certain who will be in charge of our country in 18 months, and what (if any) commitment the new president will feel toward Iraq. The Iraqis may well complete all that is asked of them, only to be cut off by a new government that feels no responsibility for “Bush’s war.”

In Iraq, as in Vietnam, we seek to create a stable, democratic country with sufficient military power to be secure from

forces augmented by U.S. airpower was the same one that achieved victory in Afghanistan in 2001. B-52s tend to give even the smallest conventional armies a decided edge.

The response to the Easter Offensive should have been a prototype for future responses to North Vietnamese aggression. That victory, combined with forceful bombing campaigns in the fall and winter of 1972, led to the January 1973 ceasefire and the Paris Peace Accords. This was the framework for the U.S. endgame in Vietnam. We had demonstrated to our satisfaction that we had achieved if not total victory then at least a strategic stalemate. We were content to withdraw the rest of our combat forces based on a promise that diplomacy, not military power, would decide the fate of the two Vietnams. But the enemy did not accept this calculus. They allowed us to depart Vietnam, and waited for an opportunity to move again.

U.S. domestic politics soon changed the equation. President Nixon, who had shown a degree of resolve in dealing with the Communists, resigned in August 1974. The November 1974 elections returned a strongly anti-war Congress that felt no obligations to the Thieu government. One of the last acts of the outgoing Congress was the December 1974 Foreign Assistance Act, which cut aid to South Vietnam to the point where the Paris accords were

unenforceable. Aid to Cambodia, which was under brutal assault from the Khmer Rouge, was also cut. President Ford signed the act “with some reservations” but showed no inclination to use his executive power to intervene.

The results were predictable. Two days after Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act, North Vietnamese units began to test American resolve by mounting a series of attacks in Phuoc Long Province 75 miles northeast of Saigon. The U.S. failed to give air support to South Vietnamese forces, and the province fell on January 6. Two days later the Politburo in Hanoi issued orders to plan for the final drive to “liberate” the South, and the Ho Chi Minh Offensive commenced on March 10. North Vietnam planned for a two-year struggle, but the ARVN forces



Captured South Vietnamese soldiers in Saigon, April 1975

threats within and without. In both cases, we have had only moderate success in the two tasks. We began to draw down our force levels in South Vietnam in 1969, handing over responsibilities to the South Vietnamese Army (the ARVN): the so-called Vietnamization of the war. By the end of 1972, President Nixon had reduced the American presence by 95 percent. The enemy watched these developments carefully. In March 1972, they launched a massive attack, dubbed the “Easter Offensive” by the press. The North Vietnamese initially met with success, as surprised and disorganized ARVN units retreated. But the South Vietnamese forces regrouped, and—buttressed by massive U.S. air strikes and other support—were able to defeat the Communists. This model of using local ground

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could not hold without American help. Our government stood by while the North's offensive ground forward. In 55 days, all of South Vietnam was under Communist control. Cambodia fell in the same period. Then followed the abattoir: the boat people, the reeducation camps, the killing fields, and the other facets of Communist domination of Southeast Asia. President Nixon had promised "Peace with Honor," but we were handed a dishonorable defeat.

Iraq's government can look at the behavior of the U.S. toward South Vietnam in 1974–5 with no sense of confidence. They know that someday the U.S. will leave, and the best they can do is negotiate the most favorable terms. But any prudent Iraqi leader would begin planning now for the eventual betrayal of an American Congress or president unwilling to back up Iraq in a time of crisis.

Our adversaries are also watching the political currents. They understand the cyclical nature of our politics, and the potential worthlessness of American commitments when power changes hands. They will exploit this opportunity when the time is ripe. Iran's President Ahmadinejad has stated publicly that Iran will intervene in Iraqi affairs—that is, more so than it is already intervening. Saudi Arabia can be counted on to promote instability to serve its own ends. And al-Qaeda will step up its drive to found a new Baghdad Caliphate.

The debate in the U.S. over future Iraq policy has not been encouraging. Republicans counsel staying the course to achieve stability, but have not enunciated what happens afterward. Democrats vary between those who want to pull out immediately and those who want to do it one brigade per month—mistaking a calendar for a strategy.

We ought not to delude ourselves about what a tough neighborhood this is. Our adversaries will negotiate agreements and break them, just as the North Vietnamese did. Some quixotic congressmen spoke hopefully about the potential for "a negotiated settlement" in the last week before the fall of Saigon—but all we negotiated were the surrender terms. Defeat in Vietnam could have been avoided had U.S. leadership been resolute. Will we learn this lesson in time to save Iraq? **NR**

■ CULTURE WATCH

Caught with His . . .

Reflections on the Larry Craig case

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

FROM at least the time of Suetonius, the scandalous antics of the powerful have entertained and consoled the powerless, and a certain delighted disgust, a prurient lingering over sordid details, can be detected in the response to Sen. Larry Craig's arrest in the public lavatories of the Minneapolis airport. How are the mighty fallen! Is there anyone so wholly lacking in human nastiness that he finds the story of Senator Craig and the undercover policeman totally uninteresting?

I must admit that when I read it my first thought was for, or at least of, the policeman. What a job! Did he, I wonder, go to work every morning (if that is when he set out for work) with a song in his heart? Did he tell his wife the nature of his current posting, and in what detail? I know, of course, that policemen in general tend to see the seamy side of life; nevertheless, lurking about in public lavatories in order to entrap the pathetic furtive souls who seek sexual release therein seems to be going beyond the normal call of duty. Does one volunteer for such duty, or is one volunteered?

Again, how long does it take to learn what I suppose French intellectuals would call the semiotics, that is to say the signaling code, of sexual contact in such places? Is there a police manual on the subject? An Internet site, perhaps (and if so, is it for or against)? Are the signals the same statewide, nationwide, or perhaps even worldwide? Is learning the code merely a

Dr. Dalrymple is a retired prison psychiatrist and a contributing editor of *City Journal*. He is the author, most recently, of *Romancing Opiates: Pharmacological Lies and the Addiction Bureaucracy*.

matter of personal observation on the job, as it were, then rising for the purposes of law enforcement to what social anthropologists call participant observation?

However, it is not with the past and future of the arresting officer that the public is most concerned, but with that of Senator Craig. His travails have been of particular delight because he is a social conservative, and has been caught—well, I won't use the obvious expression here.

Let us just perform a small thought-experiment. Suppose the senator really were innocent of the charges: Would his explanation for his guilty plea not be a reasonable one—that he thought, however mistakenly, that he might be able thereby to avoid the adverse and humiliating publicity that would most certainly attend a trial in open court? As a prison doctor I have met men whom I believed when they told me that they had pleaded guilty, though in fact they were innocent, because they did not want to risk the added penalties that attach to a guilty verdict after a plea of innocence. In the senator's situation, even if he were innocent, there was no course he could have taken that was not disastrous for him. From the point of view of his political standing and career, he was guilty even if found innocent. Again, I have met men who were not only found, but conclusively proved beyond all reasonable doubt, to be innocent of the sexual crime with which they had been charged, who nevertheless faced all the social opprobrium that a conviction would have resulted in. Here is a sphere in which the presumption of innocence is very weak: You are guilty if charged.

Nevertheless, the guilty plea, and the arresting officer's account, make that presumption impossible in the senator's case, which raises the general question, "What kind of sexual conduct do we expect of our political leaders?" Are such leaders chosen for their political skills or for their moral character? If their character is bad in at least this one respect (as, for example, President Bill Clinton's clearly was), are we right to infer that it is bad in all respects?

The least we can expect is that they should conform themselves to the law. This is not because, if they break the law in one respect, they must be irredeemably bad men in all other respects: If the senator had been a neurosurgeon, would we have

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been correct to infer that he was untrustworthy in his professional work? It is because, in return for the respect and privileges that we accord our legislators, we demand of them that they should control the base urges (not just the sexual ones) that they no doubt share with the rest of fallen humanity, at least sufficiently not to break the law. Not to expect this is to accept total political corruption.

But suppose the senator had committed his acts in private rather than in public, and that they had been exposed by an overzealous journalist, what then? Given his public stance on such matters as family values, he would have been gleefully accused of hypocrisy, but in fact such an accusation would have been a very unsophisticated one. I believe very strongly in the virtues of politeness, but this means neither that I am myself polite in all circumstances nor that I am a vile hypocrite because I am not polite in all circumstances. It means only that I am but a man, and man is indeed a fallen creature. I would be a vile hypocrite if I never made any efforts to remain polite; but so long as I make sufficiently strenuous such efforts, I am entitled publicly to extol politeness as a virtue.

The only way to eliminate hypocrisy from the world is to eliminate standards, which has de facto been the project of liberals in the sphere of sexual relations. Whatever standard is chosen, whatever boundary is proposed, will always be violated, even by some of those who most favor it. Hypocrisy, said La Rochefoucauld, is the tribute that vice pays to virtue; to which one might add, that at least it acknowledges the difference.

But the senator, had he been caught in private, might still have been accused of indiscretion—a political failing if ever there was one. Should he then have been forced to resign? The answer is no, not if he had made reasonable efforts to be discreet, and if the press and the public it serves (or is it that it molds?) had been sufficiently obsessive and ruthless in their

prurience to expose even the most private acts. When it is almost impossible to be sufficiently discreet to evade the prying curiosity of the press and the public, indiscretion is no vice. The fault lies with the press and the public, not the politician.

Too great a prurience and willingness to condemn sexual misconduct in politicians has a doubly corrupting influence on society. First, it ensures that only the most thick-skinned, that is to say ruthless, people stand for public office, for only they will be willing to subject themselves to the prurient attentions of the media. There will thus be a tendency for the worst to get to the top.

The second ill-effect is that, contrary to the ostensible intentions of the prurient, it will tend to dissolve standards throughout society. This is because, man being a fallen creature and saints being uncommon in political life, our leaders will always be found to have feet of clay. As Dr. Johnson put it with regard to moralists, they discourse like angels, but they are but men. A man who says he has never told a lie is almost certainly a liar.

Therefore, to demand an impossible moral standard of politicians leads ultimately to an attitude in society that anything goes: for (so the argument runs psychologically, if not in strict logic) if

even the most powerful, privileged people behave in so hypocritical a fashion, why should we, the lesser fry, bother to control ourselves? Moral inflexibility leads within a short time to moral breakdown.

A proper understanding of the concept and nature of sin is what seems to be lacking in our demand that politicians should present themselves as moral exemplars. All men are sinners; all have a duty to struggle against their propensity to sin; none will entirely succeed; all are entitled, within reason, to forgiveness, because all will require it at some time or other. Politicians are no exception; we should stop investigating their personal lives unless they are publicly outrageous. Prurience, after all, is a sin.

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Everything You Always Wanted To Know about Health Care

But were afraid to ask

RAMESH PONNURU

THE future of American health care is at stake in the 2008 elections. Democratic presidential candidates John Edwards and Barack Obama have proposed a dramatic increase in the federal government's involvement in health care. Both of their plans feature regulation of the insurance industry, tax increases, a mandate that many or all people get coverage, and expanded government programs to provide health coverage. Edwards's plan, according to the press release announcing it, "may evolve toward a single-payer approach." It has been designed, that is, to turn into a straightforward national health-insurance program.

Hillary Clinton has not spelled out a detailed plan, but will no doubt want to move in the same direction. Liberal health-care experts are more committed than ever to national health insurance. For tactical reasons, some of them think that the immediate objective should be some mixed public-private plan to achieve universal coverage. Others, however, believe that this approach is what doomed Senator Clinton's first effort to reform health care. In a *New York Review of Books* essay that received a lot of attention from liberals last year, Paul Krugman and Robin Wells made the case for a single-payer program, arguing that it would not have the unattractive complexity of the plan the Clintons offered in 1993. (Edwards's plan gestures toward both camps.)

Veteran left-wing journalist John Judis is nearly ready to say that "some version of national health insurance" is a done deal: He expects Democrats are going to make enough gains in the Senate next year that a Democratic president could get it passed in 2009.

Republicans have been slow to engage in the health-care debate. Nearly every forum of the Democratic presidential candidates has gone into the subject, while almost none of the Republican candidate forums has addressed the issue. President Bush waited until after the Democrats had taken Congress to introduce his most

far-reaching health-care proposals. Neither John McCain nor Fred Thompson has laid out a health-care plan. (Thompson, of course, formally announced he was running only in September.)

But Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney outlined health-care plans this summer. Bush, Giuliani, and Romney, as you might expect, have a very different agenda in mind than the Democrats. It is these Republicans who would make a more radical break with the health policies of the last 60 years.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Most Americans get their health insurance through their employers. This employer-based system is a byproduct of the wage controls imposed during World War II. The controls made it hard for employers to compete for workers by offering higher pay. Instead, they offered health benefits. From that time onward, the IRS has not treated those benefits as taxable compensation. If your employer offers you a \$1,000 raise, you will lose a chunk of it to income and payroll taxes. Not so with \$1,000 in added health benefits. For decades, it has not made financial sense for people to take the raise and buy their own health insurance.

The employer-based insurance system excludes a lot of people: If you're not employed, or if your employer doesn't offer health insurance, it is hard to get good insurance on your own. The market for individually purchased insurance has been small—unsurprising, given how the tax code is biased against it. The system also produces a variety of anxieties. While 47 million Americans lack health insurance at any given point in time, around 60 million lack it at some point in the course of a year. Some people refrain from switching jobs because they're worried about losing their health insurance. Other people worry that their employer will short-change their needs when it comes time

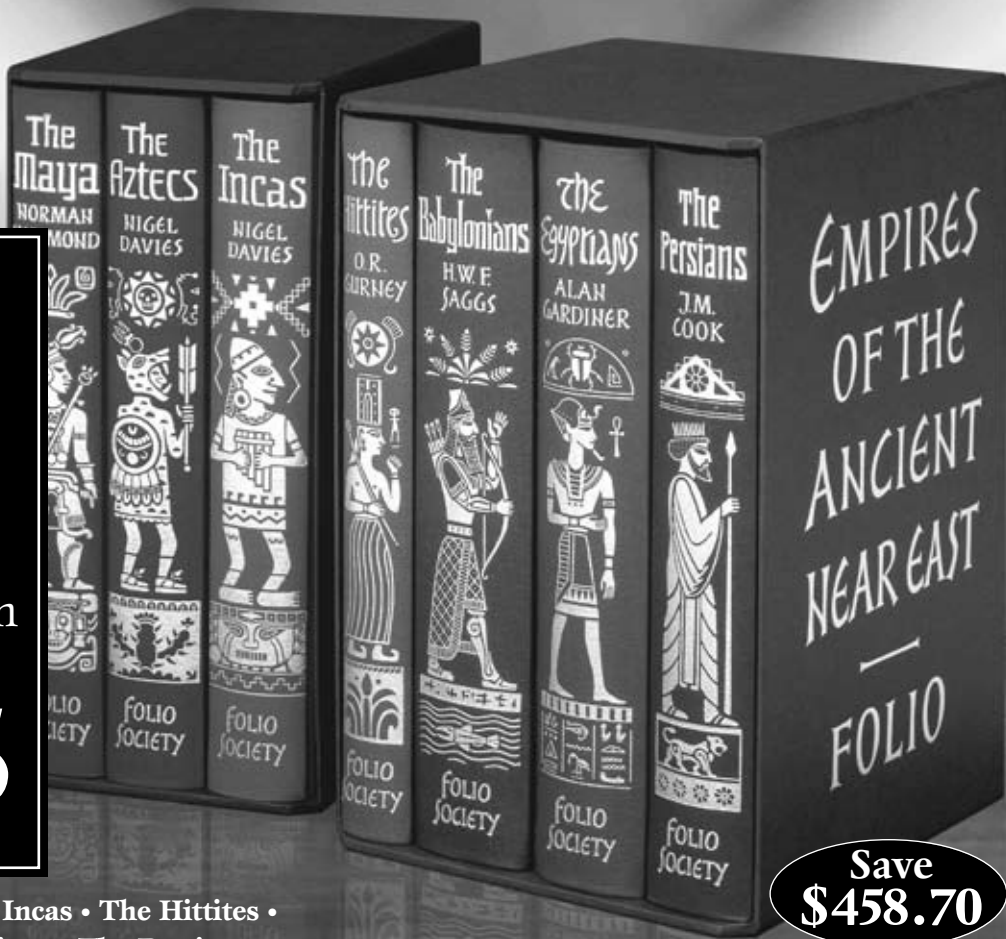
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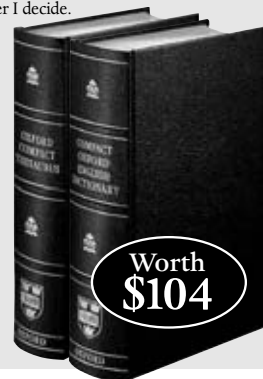
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to pick a health policy. They don't own their policies; their employers do.

The very fact that the tax code encourages employers' provision of insurance introduces another distortion. If workers were buying a policy themselves, with no tax break to affect their decision, they might prefer a cheap policy that covers only catastrophic medical expenses while leaving them to pay for routine care out of pocket. But the playing field isn't level: Your incentive is to have as many of your health expenses as possible qualify for the tax break, which means you want your employer-provided insurance to cover even routine expenses. Health "insurance" is no longer primarily a matter of insuring against remote but predictable risks, but of prepaying for health expenses. Instead of hedging risks, it socializes costs.

When routine medical procedures are covered, however, patients are tempted to overuse them. This overuse raises health-care costs and makes those procedures less affordable for people who aren't covered. Health maintenance organizations, or HMOs, arose in response to the cost problem. Since employees had no incentive to control costs, employers resorted to picking health plans that would control costs by limiting their employees' access to treatments. As HMOs became a larger share of the market, costs stopped rising in the mid-1990s. But Americans rebelled against rationing, the HMOs loosened their grip, and costs resumed their upward march.

It is largely because of its reliance on employer-based insurance that America has what the experts call a "fragmented" health-care system. The government has created programs to cover populations that employers do not, such as retirees and the poor and unemployed. This fragmented system features a lot of administrative overhead and cost-shifting, as government agencies, employers, private insurers, and patients all scramble to avoid being stuck with bills.

One form of cost-shifting is called "cherry picking." Since insurers want policyholders to generate more revenue than costs, they want to avoid covering people who have chronic medical problems. If you have lost your employer-based insurance, for whatever reason, and are trying to buy a new insurance policy as an individual, you will have a hard time if you have a "pre-existing condition."

Conservatives and liberals alike contrast American health care to that in other countries where the government pays for almost all medical bills. But the contrast can be overstated. The government already pays almost half the medical costs in this country, and it has strong influence on the way the private sector spends its health-care dollars. Only 15 percent of American health costs are paid out of pocket. Seventeen industrialized nations have a higher percentage. Our supposedly market-based system features a high degree of cost insulation.

The tax code, as noted above, has shaped the private health-care market. Restrictions on who can perform medical services also keep their prices higher than they otherwise would be. And states have imposed an ever-larger number of mandates on insurers. Arkansas is one of thirteen states, for example, that require health insurance to cover *in vitro* fertilization. Add up such mandates, and the effect can be to price a lot of people out of the market. Duke University professor Christopher Conover estimates that the number of uninsured Americans would drop by a quarter if these mandates disappeared.

Liberals and conservatives have different critiques of employer-based health insurance, but they agree that it is flawed. And both

sides generally want to transfer some of the responsibility to pay for health care away from employers: to individuals in the case of conservatives, and to government in the case of liberals.

Liberal policies typically build on the current system. If that system leaves increasing numbers of people without insurance, liberals have the government patch up the system by extending coverage to them. In some cases, they subsidize businesses to get them to cover more people. Or they prohibit insurance companies from cherry-picking and then subsidize them to stay in business. Even the single-payer proposal is less radical than it may sound. It would make explicit the current system's prepayment and socialization of costs, while reducing its administrative costs and its penalization of people with pre-existing conditions.

THE MULTIPLE PROBLEMS OF SINGLE-PAYER

How well would a government-financed system work? Many other developed countries have them, so we can look abroad for answers. Liberals tend to exaggerate how much better those other countries have it, and conservatives, how much worse. Libertarian economist Arnold Kling points out that no country can escape from what he calls the health-care "trilemma." No country can simultaneously insulate its citizens from the costs of health care, keep those costs down, and let its citizens have access to high-quality medicine. Trade-offs are unavoidable.

Kling points out that advocates of national health insurance often play a bit of a shell game to obscure the inevitability of this trade-off. They will point to Medicare as an example of how a government-financed system can be both popular and offer beneficiaries access to all the latest treatments, but then will ignore Medicare's huge costs. Or they will point to the low costs in Canada and Great Britain, while ignoring how much rationing has been required to achieve them.

The advocates of national health insurance argue that America spends more than any other country on health care and that we still have a higher infant mortality rate and a lower life expectancy than other developed nations. Both factual points are correct. But the infant-mortality rates are misleading. In this country, a premature delivery followed by death would be counted toward the infant-mortality rate; not so in some other countries. And whatever we think of our health-care system, it is not to blame for the fact that America has a lot of car wrecks and homicides. When health economist Robert Ohsfeldt and John Schneider adjusted for these factors, the U.S. had the highest life expectancy of any developed country. (And they didn't correct for obesity rates, which would make our advantage look even bigger, just like our waistlines.)

Opponents of national health insurance have their own statistics, some of which also need to be taken with a grain of salt. They point out that the U.S. does better at detecting many types of cancer early and at treating them. Women with thyroid cancer survive longer in the U.S. than in Europe. (Here's the grain: The U.S. has a higher survival rate in part because more of the cases our doctors detect are not serious.)

And as Michael Tanner points out in a forthcoming paper for the Cato Institute, people who could benefit from statins, the cholesterol-lowering drugs, are much more likely to get them in this country than in Europe. Proponents of national health insurance can point to a few countries that have seen technological innovations diffused as widely as they are in the U.S. What they cannot

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find is socialistic systems that generate the innovations in the first place. Our edge probably has something to do with our universities, but also with the freer rein given to the profit motive in our medical sector, especially in our pharmaceutical industry.

Tanner also notes that the most attractive foreign health-care systems are those that incorporate some free-market elements. France, more and more held up as a model by liberals, is not a single-payer country. The private-insurance market, though smaller than ours, is larger than that in most places with national health insurance; and even the government-run system makes patients pay part of their freight. Even so, it is not clear how much longer the French system will be a model: Costs and waiting times are going up, as is discontent among doctors. France may soon join the list of countries, including Canada, that are liberalizing their health-care markets.

But the truth is that the best national health-insurance programs do not bear out the horror stories that conservatives like to tell about them. Whether we could replicate their successes is another matter. All these systems use governmental rationing to some extent to keep costs down. Would Americans put up with it? Would our tort system? (It is notably more litigation-happy than France's.)

To put it another way: Our health-care policies, and the results to which they have led, are deeply flawed. People who generally trust markets have no stake in defending those policies. It may even be possible to imagine a national health-insurance program that seems more libertarian than the status quo. But that leaves open the question of whether there is a free-market model for health care that would also work—and even work better.

TOMORROW, CAPITALISM

It is not as though free markets have failed in health care, after all, although we are regularly told that they have. They have not been tried. Republican health reformers disagree with one another about some important matters. Is Romney right to propose making all out-of-pocket health expenses deductible? Should we require everyone to get some basic level of health insurance? All of them, however, agree that a less regulated health-care system could avoid many ailments of the status quo. In particular, they believe that we should move away not only from reliance on employer-based insurance, but also from the type of insurance to which that reliance has led.

The leading Republican proposal is the one that President Bush offered in January: a standard deduction for health care. The idea, which Giuliani has adopted, is to extend the tax break now given to employer-provided insurance to individually purchased insurance as well. Unlike the current tax break, the standard deduction would be the same amount for everyone. If your health policy cost less, you could pocket the difference; if it cost more, you would have to pay for it yourself. (The 20 percent of

the population with the most expensive health plans would thus face a tax increase; everyone else would get a tax cut.)

Some Republican senators, led by Tom Coburn and Jim DeMint, have modified the proposal by making the standard deduction into a refundable tax credit, which would be worth more to low-income workers. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the original proposal would help 7 million Americans who don't have insurance get it; the Coburn version of the proposal would presumably make a bigger dent in the uninsured population. (The CBO estimate does not consider the dynamic effects of the proposal, such as how it might reduce medical prices.)

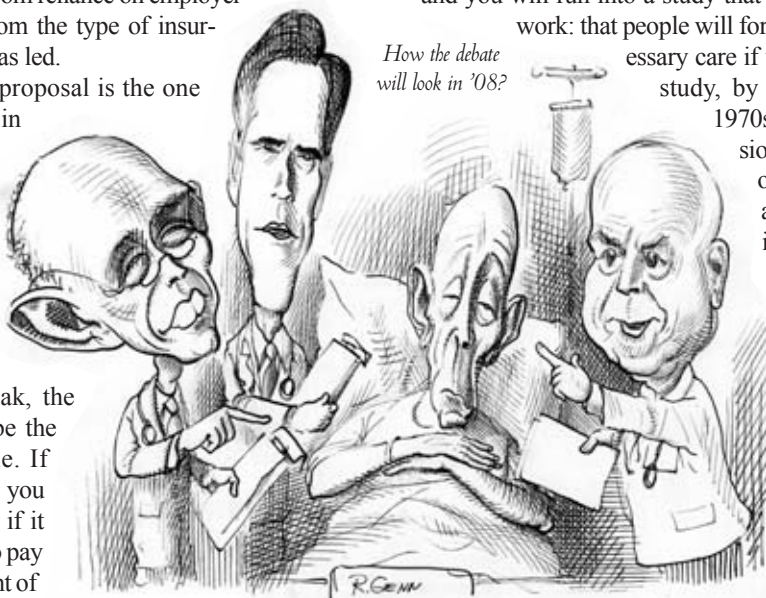
President Bush has also endorsed Republican congressman John Shadegg's bill to let people on the individual market buy health insurance from out of state. That way, they could avoid their own states' health-insurance mandates if they were too onerous.

Mitt Romney has a more complicated proposal that does not go as far as Bush's. But his proposal, too, would reduce the federal tax code's bias against individual ownership of health policies. All of these proposals build on health savings accounts, an earlier attempt to reduce the tax code's influence on health markets that was enacted in 2003. Those accounts are for people who buy high-deductible insurance policies. They can save money tax-free in the accounts to pay for both their insurance premiums and the out-of-pocket expenses they incur below the deductible. The accounts are rapidly expanding their share of the market: Already, 6 million people have HSAs.

Over time, any of these proposals—they are usually grouped under the label “consumer-directed health care”—could be expected to lead to an increase in the proportion of people with high-deductible insurance policies; an increase in the proportion of people who own their own insurance policies, whatever the deductible; and an increase in the proportion of health spending that is paid for out of pocket. The hope is that, as people have more direct responsibility for their health-care costs, they will exert downward pressure on prices, either by shopping around or by forgoing unnecessary care.

Read enough liberal analyses of consumer-directed health care, and you will run into a study that supposedly proved that it can't work: that people will forego necessary as well as unnecessary care if they are on the hook for it. The study, by the Rand Corporation in the 1970s, did indeed reach that conclusion. But “necessary care” is a bit of a term of art. The study found almost no evidence that people in consumer-directed plans had worse health outcomes than people in other types of plans. (The one exception: It found that low-income people in consumer-directed plans had higher risks of hypertension. But that's not very relevant to today's debates, since Medicaid covers low-income people and HSAs pay for hypertension

How the debate will look in '08?



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medications.) No study since then has shown that consumer-directed health care harms anyone's health.

Some analysts argue that patients can't make wise decisions. Jonathan Cohn, a scrupulous and indefatigable evangelist for universal health care, writes in *The New Republic* that "consumers need good information in order for a market to work. And good information on health care is just not that easy to find." Anyone who has tried to decipher a hospital bill knows he's right. But the lack of accessible information may very well reflect the absence of a consumer-responsive market. If the market expands, price transparency should increase, and institutions will find that there is a profit in providing patients with accurate, up-to-date information about, say, which hospitals are best at treating which conditions.

The most serious concern that liberals raise about consumer-directed health care is that it will cause, first, an "unraveling" of the employer-based system and, second, a transfer of health costs from the wealthy and healthy to the poor and sick. Advocates of free-market medicine plead guilty on the first charge and innocent on the second.

The theory behind the latter complaint is that high-deductible policies will principally appeal to people who do not foresee themselves needing extensive coverage, either because they have the money to pay for any crises or they're unlikely to have them. Traditional insurance policies—low-deductible, employer-provided—will end up covering only the sick and poor. They will have more and more customers who take out more than they pay in. So their premiums will go up, which will lead more healthy and wealthy customers to leave. A vicious cycle of "adverse selection" will leave vulnerable populations without the insurance they need.

The liberals' premise is that insurance is there to socialize costs. Low-cost people need to be in the insurance pool to make health care possible for high-cost people. Fifty-seven percent of the uninsured are younger than 35. The young have less money than the middle-aged, which explains why some go without. Health-care policy experts have given a lot of thought to how to get the ones who can afford health insurance to get it. But the reason the experts want them included may be the reason the young, healthy, or wealthy themselves don't: Health insurance as we know it isn't a great deal for them. It is a scheme for them to subsidize other people.

Cheaper insurance that covered catastrophic expenses would be a better deal for them. That does not mean it would necessarily be a worse deal for everyone else. Some people with health problems may prefer the flexibility of HSAs. It is impossible to predict just what type of person is going to get these policies. They might have more appeal to young people because they think they will stay healthy; but they might have less appeal to them because they tend to be in lower tax brackets and thus won't benefit much from the new tax breaks.

How would a free market handle those people with "pre-existing conditions"? In a less fragmented system, healthy people might be able to buy term insurance with the option to renew even if they get sick. Some states have enacted "guaranteed issue" and "community rating" laws that require insurers to cover people with pre-existing conditions at the same rate they charge everyone else. But such laws create an adverse-selection problem of their own. They make insurance a worse deal for the healthy *and* make it easy for them to wait until they're sick to buy insurance. Mark Pauly and

Bradley Heering of the American Enterprise Institute has found that states with these laws don't end up with much more risk-pooling; they end up with high-cost people making up a higher proportion of the insured population.

Whether health markets are relatively free or heavily regulated, they could look very different in the future as our knowledge of the human genome advances. It may be that we will be able to tell from birth, or even beforehand, what diseases people have a high risk of developing. If so, they will likely be uninsurable, at least for those diseases. If free-market health care worked for most people, though, this failure would not be a case for upending it. It would be a case for subsidizing a subset of the population so that it could get the care it needed.

No matter how cheap free-market reform made basic insurance policies, some people, chiefly the young, would not buy them. Republican reformers are divided about what to do about these holdouts. Some of them believe that they should be forced to buy insurance, so that they would not visit emergency rooms and send everyone else's premiums higher. Others argue that the premium increase is small, and the risks of mandatory coverage large. The Urban Institute estimates that uncompensated care is less than 3 percent of health spending. Eliminating that cost through forced coverage would require the government to define a basic benefits package, which would be an invitation to provider groups to lobby the government to re-create the mandates that state governments have piled on insurance. My own view is that, in a fairly free system, the holdouts should be left to do as they please.

THE S-CHIP PRELUDE

With Democrats in charge of Congress and liberals feeling the wind at their backs, free-market health-care reform looks unlikely at the moment. Its advocates are on the defensive. They are worried about the proposals of the Democratic candidates for president in 2008. And they are losing the public-relations battle over the Democrats' big health-care initiative for 2007: a massive expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, commonly called S-CHIP.

Don't let the title of the program fool you: It may be run by the states, but it is primarily funded by the federal government. It was designed a decade ago to cover children whose parents were too successful to qualify for Medicaid but still not able to afford private health coverage. The Democrats, and a sizable minority of Republicans, want to extend that coverage up the income ladder. The Senate passed a bill to let states expand the program to cover children from families making three times the poverty level. The House passed a bill that would let coverage extend to families making four times the poverty level. That's \$82,000 for a family of four.

If President Bush has his way, the program will cost \$30 billion over the next five years. The Senate bill would cost \$60 billion, and the House bill \$75 billion, over the same period. Bush argues that the program should concentrate on the needy rather than the middle class, which is probably not a position that will win middle-class votes. S-CHIP critics further argue that the expansion of the program will "crowd out" private health insurance: People will drop their existing coverage to take the handouts. Generally these people will be trading down: S-CHIP coverage isn't as good as private insurance. On the other hand, some children who lack health insurance now will get it if the program expands.

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Supporters of expansion say that it is appropriate to help middle-class families because it has been getting harder for them to get health insurance. In New Jersey, which has done the most to expand S-CHIP coverage, it can even be hard for a family of four making \$82,000 a year. But that is largely the fault of New Jersey's government, which has imposed heavier regulatory burdens on health insurance than almost all other states.

Moreover, government programs such as Medicaid and S-CHIP itself have helped to make private coverage unaffordable. They bid up the price of medical services. They also have subtler effects. Medicaid, for example, uses its bargaining power to pay only 90 percent of what private insurers do for drugs. In order to get more money from Medicaid, then, drug companies have to charge more to private insurers. In 2004, two academics found that the price of non-Medicaid prescriptions is 13 percent higher than it would be without Medicaid's price controls. And we can be sure that expanding S-CHIP will increase the cost of private insurance: The bill includes a tax on private insurance policies.

Medicaid may illustrate the future of S-CHIP. When he was governor of Ohio, Bob Taft called Medicaid "the monster in the middle of the road" because of its impact on the state's budget. Its design made it monstrous. When times are flush, state governments can expand the program knowing that the feds will pay half the tab. Giving your constituents \$2 in services for every \$1 in taxes is a deal few governors or state legislators can resist. When times are lean, meanwhile, the state faces a budget crisis—and cutting Medicaid yields the state government only 50 cents for every dollar of pain imposed.

Richer states have been more willing to spend money on Medicaid and thus have gotten more of the federal dollars. Robert Helms of the American Enterprise Institute observes that nine states got half of all Medicaid funds. "[T]he higher the poverty rate in a state, the fewer federal funds that state receives per capita," he writes. "The 'Katrina states'—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas—have higher poverty rates but lower federal payments, while a group of mostly northeastern states with lower poverty rates gets approximately twice the amount of federal funds per person in poverty."

The federal government pays an even higher proportion of S-CHIP's bills. The only reason S-CHIP has not developed the way Medicaid has is that there is a cap on S-CHIP payouts; Congress has to enact special bailouts to exceed them. The bills before Congress get rid of that cap. Naturally, the nation's governors are all for the bill; only three Republican governors object. Provider groups—notably the drug companies—are also on board: S-CHIP expansion will bring them new revenue, at least in the short run.

One factor that is being totally ignored in the debate is that S-CHIP, Medicaid, and other programs together create a poverty trap for many recipients. If the program expands, Cato's Michael Cannon writes, many people will find that earning a raise will cost them so much in lost subsidies that they'll end up behind where they started.

Liberals more or less openly consider S-CHIP expansion a down payment on national health insurance. For the same reason, President Bush vows to veto the bill. We have two big trends in health care, and they are on a collision course. Consumer-directed health care is expanding rapidly, but so is government-provided health care. The collision will happen in November 2008. **NR**

■ PUBLIC POLICY III

The Wilberforce Agenda

How evangelicals, Republicans, and everyone else can make strides

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

OVER the last month, a minor but significant journalistic row has been roiling the airwaves. It began when Bill Moyers, closing his own show, accused the departing Karl Rove of being a cynical agnostic who exploited religion and the Christian Right for strictly political advantage while having no religious belief of his own. Rove had confessed his agnosticism to friends, said Moyers, and on his last play of the game all he could offer the Christian Right was "a Hail Mary pass while telling himself there's no one there to catch it."

Appearing on *Fox News Sunday* a few days later, Rove responded: "I'm a Christian. I go to church. I'm an Episcopalian." The following week, Chris Wallace, the Fox-show host, supported Rove and added caustically, in a direct address to Moyers: "If you want to find out about someone's religious beliefs, a good first step might be to ask him. . . . Of course, you never called Rove. That's Reporting 101, but it would have gotten in the way of a tasty story line about a nonbeliever flimflaming the Christian Right. I guess, Bill, reporting is easier when you don't worry about the facts."

Moyers's people have responded that they did so talk to Rove. They invited him on the show. That is not quite the same thing as asking him a simple question about his religious beliefs, however. Moyers's reliance on other people's claims about Rove's personal beliefs undermines his argument and tends to support Rove and Wallace.

Why is this significant? Moyers is almost a caricature of the Pharisee who thanks God that he is not as other men (especially those, er, *anti-tax-collectors*). But the sad likelihood is that Moyers was quite sincere in his criticism of Rove. Certainly others on the left and center of U.S. politics share the prejudice underlying it.

THE REAL DEAL?

This prejudice suspects that the relationship between the GOP and evangelicals is cynical and corrupt. Greed-crazed Republicans promise to deliver school prayer and to halt abortion and gay marriage in return for votes and tax cuts. Evangelical leaders, for their part, deliver the votes in return for a place at the

Mr. O'Sullivan would like to express his gratitude to Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute for advice and guidance on this article.

Arab-Moslem Fanaticism and Intransigence

Are they the root cause of Mid-East turmoil?

For the last six decades, the world has been convinced, mostly because of unrelenting Arab propaganda, that the conflict between Israel and the "Palestinians" is the root cause of the constant turmoil in the Middle East and that Israel should make "concessions" to the Arabs. But is that the real reason for the turmoil and for the violence? Or is there another much deeper, more fundamental reason behind it?

What are the facts?

Islam's hatred against the West. Americans are reluctant to criticize or even to discuss the religions of others. We consider it a personal matter. But the hatred of the Muslim-Arab world against the West, especially against the United States (the "Great Satan") and Israel (the "Little Satan"), can only be explained by comprehending the psychology and the principal religious tenets of Islam. Islam is a world-wide religion, but it originated in Arabia and it survives in Arabia in its purest form, unaffected by any outside influences. The policies of the Arab countries are dominated by Islam. Islam believes itself to be in possession of the holy truth, in the name of which any act of violence is permitted and encouraged. It is only with that understanding that the acts of savagery, the suicide bombers in Israel, the bombing of the World Trade Center, and other acts of murderous fanaticism all over the world can be explained.

Rise and decline of the Arab Muslims. For the first six centuries after the Muslims spilled forth from Arabia, they conquered much of the world. The Arab Muslims did in their ascendancy give rise to a substantial civilization. But, beginning with their expulsion from Spain, a long decline set in that lasted until the early 20th century. That decline was the more bitter, because it was inflicted by the despised "infidels." It was something that had to be remedied by whatever means. Injured pride had to be salved; the enemies who caused this humiliation and this injury had to be destroyed.

Acts of terror in the United States, Argentina, England, and Israel have sobered many who had believed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be the cause for the unrest in the Middle East. The fact is that war is endemic in the Arab world and that the Muslim Arabs have been waging war against each other and against their non-Arab neighbors for centuries. But, as much as the Muslim Arabs hate each other, most of them are united in their greater hatred against the "infidel Jews" and their tiny country, and they have built vast war machines for the ultimate "jihad" to nuke the Jews, to poison them by chemicals or biologicals, or to chase them into the sea. The focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is designed to divert attention from the many domestic and inter-Arab problems, and to direct the Muslim-Arab frustration against Israel, the "infidel Western outsider." The suggestion that Israel divest itself from its historic heartland, the 2,362 sq. mi. "West Bank," and from the Golan would lead to strategic suicide. The real cause of the never-ending turmoil in the Middle East is the unrelenting desire of still most of the Arab-Muslim states to destroy Israel, their inability to come to terms with its very existence. That hatred and that intolerance are fueled by Arab-Muslim fanaticism and intransigence and unwillingness to accept diversity in the region. Only when that will be overcome can peace and tranquility finally come to the Middle East.

The 20th century brought national independence to the Arab states. Two other fundamental events occurred: 1) The discovery of the world's largest oil deposits under the Arabian peninsula, and 2) The creation, in 1948, of the state of Israel, which ever since its birth has been the concentrated focus of the hatred and venom of all Muslim Arabs, a hatred that unites them, that even surpasses their hatreds against each

"The real cause of the never-ending turmoil in the Middle East is the unrelenting desire of still most Muslim-Arab states to destroy Israel..."

other, and that has launched them into five disastrous wars against Israel. Even the rape of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq was explained as being a step towards the "liberation of Palestine," a claim so bizarre, so patently

absurd, that it can only be comprehended and given credence by a mind obsessed with the ideology of Arab Islam.

Muslim Arabs obsessed with Israel. The obsession of the Muslim Arabs with Israel is totally irrational. To have Israel as an independent country in the middle of the Arab-Muslim world is utterly intolerable to them. That is the reason that, making allowance for the very cold peace with Egypt and the more recently concluded peace with Jordan, the 21 Arab states, among them the richest countries in the world, with a combined population of more than 200 million and with a land area greater than that of the U.S., have concentrated obsessive ferocity by military, economic, ideological, political, diplomatic, and any other means to destroy the tiny Jewish community of Palestine, and its successor, the Jewish state of Israel—only 7 million people, in a country just one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California.

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GOP top table. One version of this suspicion holds that the GOP has no real intention of delivering the Christian Right's agenda; another warns it is just on the verge of finally doing so; all versions alarm someone somewhere.

Secular liberals and libertarians, including those in the GOP, fear that the party is about to restrict their liberties without even the excuse of sincere motives. Evangelicals fear that they are being half-willingly deceived by cold-hearted Machiavellians. Direct mail exaggerates these fears on both sides. As the nation fractures along a deep line of moral-cum-religious division, the media, who are very much on one side of that line, increasingly demonize those on the other. Republicans and evangelicals gradually come to look at these caricatures of each other with a suspicion of their own. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young evangelicals under attack in college as allies of greedy corporations return home questioning the corrupt deal their parents have supposedly made.

Some of these tensions are the inevitable result of deep moral divisions—the “culture wars.” Abortion, gay marriage, religious expression in public life are matters of strong belief for all evangelicals and most political conservatives, and also for those on the opposite side of these barricades. No one will abandon them for the sake of civility. The Democrats illustrated exactly that after the 2004 election, when they invited pro-lifers back into the party on the understanding that its commitment to abortion was irreversible.

All the same, we may be maximizing these tensions because of the perceived narrowness of the Christian Right/GOP moral agenda. There is more to politics, morality, and life than abortion and gay marriage. A whole series of political issues involves moral concerns and should arouse evangelical passions. The Christian Left is very much alive to this fact. Its leaders are currently urging evangelical (and other) Christians to oppose the GOP on “global warming” and related concerns deriving from the so-called “social gospel.” Unfortunately, the social gospel and its more extreme Catholic equivalent, liberation theology, both make religion the handmaiden of politics rather than vice versa. They begin by urging us to adopt Christian principles of social justice but end by specifying that these require solutions rooted in socialist intervention. Their prescriptions will simply add to the number of issues dividing society along moral lines.

A NEW AGENDA

What is required—and what evangelicals are historically well-equipped to deliver—is an agenda of moral issues, covering national and international issues, on which Left, Right, and Center (with or without the Christian prefix) can be reasonably expected to agree. As it happens, such an agenda exists. Some of it has already been passed into legislation (which is, however, only the first stage of its implementation). And most of it is the work of legislators generally associated with the Christian Right—such as Sen. Sam Brownback (Kansas) and Reps. Chris

Smith (N.J.) and Frank Wolf (Va.). Let us list a few of its more striking items:

Halting the international and domestic trafficking and enslavement of millions of girls, women, and children. This is the object of the Brownback-Wellstone-Smith-Lantos Trafficking Victims Protection Act. As the names Lantos and Wellstone suggest, it has bipartisan support. It also has what might be called bi-ideological support, from both evangelicals and feminists.

Promoting international religious freedom as a core element of U.S. human-rights policy. This is the object of the Wolf-Specter International Religious Freedom Act.

Eliminating domestic prison rape and violence, which is the purpose of the Kennedy-Sessions Prison Rape Elimination Act. Though passed, this law will need the help of constant public and congressional pressure if it is to be implemented by state prison officers.

Upgrading the inhumane conditions of Third World prisons. An International Inhumane Prisons Act will soon be introduced into Congress by a coalition that includes the National Association of Evangelicals, the Southern Baptist Convention, Human Rights Watch, and the Open Society Institute founded by George Soros.

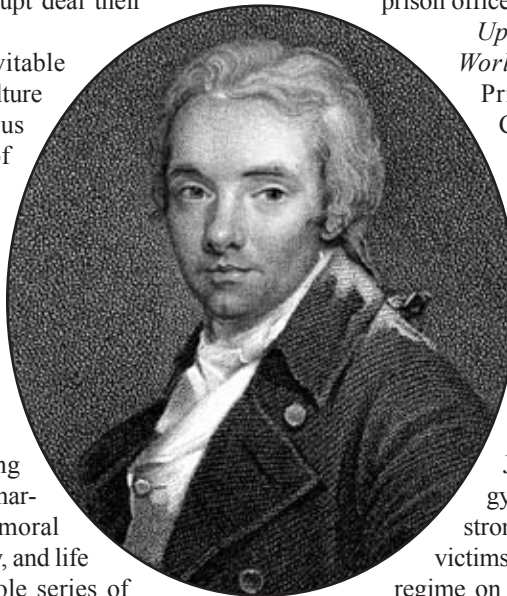
Adopting a “Helsinki strategy” of advancing human rights as a key element in dealing with the government of North Korea. As long as the State Department treats North Korea solely as a problem for anti-nuclear policy, Kim Jong Il will be able to extract aid and energy concessions from the U.S. Pressing more strongly for the human rights of Kim's subject-victims will both assist them directly and put the regime on the defensive generally. The Brownback-Bayh North Korean Human Rights Act is designed to achieve these goals.

Developing and sustaining the AIDS initiative originally proposed to the Bush administration by evangelical leaders.

Reducing the ability of oppressive regimes to monitor and censor Internet communications. A provision attached by Rep. Frank Wolf and Sen. Patrick Leahy to the current Foreign Operations Appropriations Act would mandate USAID to support a major initiative to foster Internet freedom in dictatorships throughout the world.

Ensuring the peaceful promotion of democracy as a key theme in U.S. foreign policy. A Lantos-Wolf-McCain-Lieberman Advance Democracy Bill sought to do this; a new law, modified by the administration, puts it into effect.

The first and most obvious thing to say about these (and similar) measures is that they are overwhelmingly worth doing for their own sake. Making allowances for the usual qualifications, they would improve the lives of trafficked women, of brutalized prisoners, of AIDS patients, of captive nations. If no other object were achieved, that would justify them. They also contain at least the possibility of bringing about much larger social and political changes than they openly proclaim. For instance, improving the human rights of North Koreans, in addition to being a good thing



William Wilberforce

in itself, might also begin to destabilize a dangerously genocidal regime. Similarly, a policy of spreading Internet freedom would greatly complicate the lives of regimes in China, Iran, and Cuba. All three regimes have recently embarked on expensive programs to control Internet communications. Yet freedom is lighter on its feet: A small group of Falun Gong volunteers have created "Firewall Buster" protocols that now receive 150 million hits per day in China and, more surprisingly, 10 million hits per day in Iran.

ROOTED IN HISTORY

Another important point is that these proposals, though far from easy, are manifestly achievable. Improving prisons, ensuring that women crossing frontiers do so freely, withholding technical information from oppressive regimes, assisting NGOs that promote democracy are all relatively straightforward tasks. They are reminiscent of the more difficult campaign of the late 18th century to eradicate slavery worldwide—and of later campaigns, initiated by Salvation Army founders William and Catherine Booth, to end the trafficking of women and improve conditions in English prisons.

As Eric Metaxas and William Hague—recent biographers of William Wilberforce—reminded us earlier this year, the abolition of the slave trade was secured by an evangelical sect so small that it was named after the village near London where almost all its

members lived: the "Claphamites." But they won hostile or uninterested people over to their cause by quite modern techniques of political campaigning such as developing an anti-slavery "logo" (a black man in chains surrounded by the words "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?"), boycotting (of West Indian sugar), launching their equivalent of class-action suits against slaver ships, pamphleteering, lecturing, and so on. By the time Wilberforce won passage of the act that abolished the international slave trade 200 years ago, the Claphamites had gained the support of a broad coalition, from the Tory William Pitt to the Whig Charles James Fox, excluding only the "sugar interest" itself.

The eight-point agenda listed above is also a series of evangelical campaigns that have gradually gained wide bipartisan support, as the names Wellstone, Kennedy, Lantos, Lieberman, Soros, Human Rights Watch, and Open Society Institute all confirm. This bodes well for their political prospects, but it also offers evangelicals the chance to reshape their political image and, in doing so, to reduce the poisons in political life. And they need make no concessions of principle to do so.

Though evangelicals were mainly responsible for these campaigns, they have gained little political credit for them. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the rest of the establishment media are happier writing about Christians' besieging of abortion clinics than about their joining with feminists to halt sex trafficking. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, this is fine—the evangelicals can lay



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up treasure in Heaven—but it's a definite handicap when waging future campaigns. Many liberals would be astonished to discover that the Christian Right is campaigning to stop prison rape. Their mental image of evangelicals is one of people who favor the worst possible treatment of criminals. Fair coverage would introduce a valuable note of cognitive dissonance into the average liberal's prejudice against evangelicals.

How is such coverage to be obtained? What evangelicals should do as a first step is to package the proposals above as a new political "Wilberforce Agenda" and to seek support across the spectrum. While they would not lessen their opposition to abortion or same-sex marriage, they would set their position on those issues in a broader human-rights context. Evangelicals could patiently explain that their positions were rooted in the same concern for suffering innocents as leads them to campaign for trafficked women, AIDS victims, Tibetan Buddhists, etc. They would campaign for the Wilberforce Agenda in this ecumenical spirit, seeking to forge a coalition on issues of common interest across a cultural divide that now appears unbridgeable. And by winning new allies issue by issue, as has already happened in some cases, they would calm the shrill tone of American debate and lessen the present ability of anti-faith activists and the national media to subject them to caricature.

It is very likely, however, that a new Wilberforce Agenda will require a new Wilberforce. In an election year, any major new political campaign needs a champion from among the presidential contenders. In addition, the evangelical-Republican alliance—the topic on which we began—would be both strengthened and justified if a potential Republican president were to be heard speaking evangelical language boldly and eloquently. Such an ally would also be better able than evangelicals themselves to defend them to other Americans as decent people who have been grossly caricatured.

Sam Brownback would now be the natural Wilberforce if his campaign had not gone awry. But it did, and the slowing down of his presidential effort leaves open the field to the four remaining major GOP contenders. Each of them has a particular weakness with the evangelical vote—Romney's Mormonism, McCain's loss of most other GOP constituencies, Giuliani's pro-choice position, and the general vagueness of Thompson's philosophy—that an embrace of the Wilberforce Agenda would help to overcome. It is an agenda that appeals to most Americans from left to right because it helps suffering people, advances American interests and values, and does so peacefully and cheaply.

And if they don't seize the moment, someone else will. Imagine Hillary Clinton answering the question: "Why Do You Want To Be President?"

"Because I have seen fellow Christians with whom I disagree on many issues teach us all the lesson of Christian witness on critical human-rights issues, and thus help teach us all how deeply we share common values. Because I want to help build an America that never yields to voices that tell us that, as Democrats and Republicans, as liberals and conservatives, as religious and secular Americans, we are members of hostile camps. These voices are both wrong and dangerous, and my presidency will be dedicated to making sure that we are a country both strong and united."

Bill Moyers might even be asking the question.

NR

■ RELIGION

Way of Darkness

The suffering of Mother Teresa

MICHAEL NOVAK

THE past week, Christians and non-Christians alike have been e-mailing me about the meaning of Mother Teresa's nearly half a century of inner emptiness, as revealed by her own words in confidential writings to her spiritual directors, now gathered together as evidence in the process of canonization. Many of my correspondents had not known of Mother Teresa's long inability to sense the presence of God, and the inner agony in which this left her. All they had seen was her huge, broken smile, as if God's love filled her heart, when in fact her heart felt empty. Still she forged on, to bring tenderness to abandoned persons dying in the streets of Calcutta. If she couldn't find God, why did she go on believing in him? Why did she go on bringing love to the abandoned, when she herself felt so abandoned?

Some atheists, such as my friend Christopher Hitchens, now gloat that Mother Teresa was just an unbeliever like the rest of "us." But few atheists—and, alas, not many believers—understand the depths of the interior life of Jewish and Christian faith. They don't understand that one must fight an inner battle. Biblical faith demands putting childhood behind, and adolescence, and the busy-ness of young adulthood. It demands an appetite for bravery—for going into unknown territories alone, to wrestle inner demons, and a willingness to experience darkness, if darkness comes. Faith is not for those who seek only man-made pleasures.

I had one tiny reason for feeling especially close to Mother Teresa from the first time I heard of her. My younger brother Richard was a missionary to Bengali-speakers, as Mother Teresa was. But Richard did his work across the Bay of Bengal from Calcutta, in Dhaka, then part of East Pakistan. Two years after he arrived there, as he was setting out by bicycle on a mission of mercy during the cruel Hindu-Muslim riots of January 1964, Dick was knifed to death by a group of young men who seized his bicycle and his wristwatch. He was 27 years old. They threw his body into a river already thick with corpses.

THE LITTLE THÉRÈSE

Dick's favorite saint was St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897), a frail Carmelite nun, second only to St. Francis of Assisi as the most beloved of all Catholic saints. (I have only once in years of traveling around the world found a Catholic church without some depiction of her.) Thérèse lived for most of her adult life in utter darkness and dryness and abandonment by her divine Lover. She

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wrote an autobiography about her experience, and how it led her to interpret the heart of Christianity. So powerfully and clearly did she write that Pope John Paul II inscribed her name among the historic handful of “Doctors of the Church”—teachers so profound and so sweeping in their wisdom that they instruct the whole Catholic people.

The canonization of Thérèse in 1925 was at the time one of the swiftest on record. Miracles attributed to her care and her attention to the needy—which she promised during her lifetime to “shower down”—were too many to count. As early as the war of 1914, Thérèse was the favorite saint of French soldiers in the trenches, held by them co-equal with Joan of Arc. And so she remains today—this 24-year-old victim of consumption, who after the age of 16 never set foot outside her cloistered contemplative convent—with Joan of Arc Co-Patroness of France.

The kernel of Thérèse’s teaching is often called “the little way,” meaning that no Christian is too humble or too insignificant to follow it. No matter what spiritual darkness you find yourself in, choose as your North Star a tender love for the persons that life’s contingencies have put next to you. Do not go looking around for more fascinating neighbors to love. Love those who are nearest. You cannot see God, even if you try. But you can see your neighbor, the tedious one, who grinds on you: Love him, love her. As Jesus loves them. Give them the tender smile of Jesus, even though your own feelings be like the bottom of a bird cage. Do not ask to see Jesus, or to feel him: That is for children. Love him in the dark. Love for the invisible divine, not for the warm and comforting human consolation. Love for the sake of love, not in order to feel loved in return.

THE DARK PATH

It happens that Agnes Bojaxhiu of Albania eventually became a missionary nun in Ireland, and chose for her religious name Thérèse, in the footsteps of the patron saint of darkness from Lisieux. In Spanish, the same name is Teresa, and St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), builder of scores of convents of Carmelite nuns all over Europe, was also an experienced traveler in inner darkness. Thérèse of Lisieux took the name in her honor, and followed in her way, as described in Teresa’s books and in the traditions of the Carmelites.

For those who love God, that way is excruciating. They would like to feel close to God, but they find—nothing! Like her contemporary, St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila gradually came to see that if God were a human invention, and a human contrivance, then warm human feelings would be quite enough. But God is far greater than that. He is beyond any human frequency. He is outside our range. One must follow him without any human

prop whatever, even warm and comfortable inner feelings. That may be why Jesus loved the desert as a place for prayer.

That is to say, our senses cannot touch God. Nor can our imagination encompass him. Our minds can form no adequate conception of him; anything the mind imagines is easily ridiculed. The God who made us and out of his infinite love redeemed us and called us to his bosom is divine, not human. As such, he cannot be found using human perceptual equipment.



‘ . . . darkly in the presence of her Beloved’

This is not a new idea. Serious and devout believers from the time of Elijah and Job have known about the darkness in which the true God necessarily dwells. In order for one’s soul to be ready to go far beyond any human contrivance, one must be willing to go out into the desert and the night. Thus we read of the prophet Elijah:

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him . . .

. . . Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9–13)

Thus, also, Job, after he had been stricken with painful boils all over his body, and sat outside where others might mock him, scraping off the scabs, and unable, now, to find the Lord in whom he had placed such utter trust:

But if I go to the east, he is not there; or to the west, I cannot perceive him; where the north enfolds him, I behold him not; by the south he is veiled, and I see him not. Yet he knows my way; if he proved me, I should come forth as gold. My foot has always walked in his steps; his way I have kept and have not turned aside. From the commands of his lips I have not departed; the words of his mouth I have treasured in my heart. . . . Therefore am I dismayed before him; when I take thought, I fear him. Indeed God has made my courage fail; the Almighty has put me in dismay. Yes, would that I had vanished in darkness, and that thick gloom were before me to conceal me. (Job 23:8–12, 15–17)

The teachings of Elijah and Job were not so different from those of St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), the other great Spaniard who founded the male order of Carmelites, the practitioners of the Dark Way of Mt. Carmel.

In more than one book, but especially in *The Dark Night of*

the Soul, St. John proceeded lesson by patient lesson to mark out for the novice at prayer the terrors yet to be faced in the desert, where human expectations were shed for those seeking to receive the divine. He vividly described the aridity and emptiness that the lover of God ought to expect, as he traded a child's faith for that of an adult, as he was weaned away from the sweet milk of infancy and obliged to live on hard, dry bread, for long stretches of time. Gradually, St. John of the Cross described what the North Stars are. And the dangers to watch for. And the characteristic temptations of every stage of the journey.

This is not an easy book to read. For one thing, it relies heavily upon the experience of the reader. It is intended to show the voyager of the spirit the ways through the night and the desert. How can anyone who has not known the night and desert recognize the symptoms and the signs? This is not a book for reading, but for experiencing.

Perhaps its main point may be expressed thus: Go, seek with love your Beloved, follow wherever he leads. Yet even when you come up to him you must anticipate that there will be no one to be seen. Your faculties are simply inadequate. Did you actually see, you would be destroyed. It is too much. Your bulbs will short out. Be prepared, therefore, to walk in darkness. Not at all in doubt; on the contrary, for the first time ever, aware that you are not now following illusions, but only the true darkling light of the true God. Anything else is human contrivance and illusion.

St. John imagines his soul as the bride, the spouse, eagerly seeking her Beloved for just one sight of him. This is his great classic song on the Dark Night, in eight brief stanzas, of which the following four are the most telling:

1. On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance!—
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.
2. In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised—oh, happy chance!—
In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.
3. In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which
burned in my heart.
4. This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday
To the place where he (well I knew who!) was awaiting me—A
place where none appeared.

THE TERESIAN DARKNESS

It would be easy here to multiply texts from Teresa of Avila, the distant mother and guide of her young follower of three centuries later, Thérèse of Lisieux, meditating on this dryness, and surprised at how acute its pain. Let us take up only a few samples.

The memoirs of Teresa of Avila recount years of spiritual aridity and torment:

I may say that it was the most painful life that can be imagined, because I had no sweetness in God, and no pleasure in the world. . . .

I believe that it is our Lord's good pleasure frequently in the

beginning, and at times in the end, to send these torments, and many other incidental temptations, to try those who love Him, and to ascertain if they will drink the chalice, and help Him to carry the Cross, before He entrusts them with His great treasures. I believe it to be for our good that His Majesty should lead us by this way, so that we may perfectly understand how worthless we are. . . .

It is certain that the love of God does not consist in tears, nor in this sweetness and tenderness which we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves; but rather in serving Him in justice, fortitude, and humility. That seems to me to be a receiving rather than a giving of anything on our part.

Of her own spiritual aridity, Thérèse of Lisieux wrote:

But during the Paschal days, so full of light, our Lord . . . allowed my soul to be overwhelmed with darkness, and the thought of Heaven, which had consoled me from my earliest childhood, now became a subject of conflict and torture. This trial did not last merely for days or weeks—I have been suffering for months, and I still await deliverance. . . . I wish could express what I feel, but it is beyond me. One must have passed through this dark tunnel to understand its blackness. . . .

Sometimes, I confess, a little ray of sunshine illumines my dark night, and I enjoy peace for an instant, but later, the remembrance of this ray of light, instead of consoling me, makes the blackness thicker still. And yet never have I felt so deeply how sweet and merciful is the Lord.

This is the context in which the new book by Mother Teresa of Calcutta must be grasped. These are her two "mothers" in spiritual growth and authentic Christian faith, in the light of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. The decades of emptiness, darkness, and inner pain experienced by Mother Teresa, and honestly set forth in her private letters to her spiritual directors, follow in a long tradition. They are not really signs of doubt, although at times they feel like that. They are in fact signs of Christian adulthood, following in the only way in which illusions of human contrivance can be scraped away, as Job tried to scrape away the dry boils on his skin. And in which the truly faithful, like Job and Elijah, can find him whom they love in the darkness, while denying him not.

Then his wife said to him, "Are you still holding to your innocence? Curse God and die." But he said to her, ". . . We accept good things from God; and should we not accept evil?" Through all this, Job said nothing sinful. (Job 2:9–10)

It is from "human fabrication" that the darkness and the desert free a person. When God subtracts his gifts, as he subtracted Job's, it is not taken as punishment; Job knows his innocence, he knows his fidelity, even in the darkness and in utter suffering. He utters not one denial of his Lord. His soul stands firm beneath the pain.

So also Mother Teresa stood darkly in the presence of her Beloved, confident that, even unseen, he is best found where love for her nearest dying, suffering neighbor presents him.

In the place where he (well she knew Who!) was awaiting her
—a place where None appeared.

NR

the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

Sense and Sensuousness

A MIDSUMMER night's column . . . I'm happy to announce that I'm getting lots of mail again. My favorite letter begins: "Dear (unique, prolific, loved-your-book, can't-get-enough-of-you) Florence King." This intelligent, perceptive, discriminating reader asks why I named my new column "The Bent Pin" and offers his theory: "Because it's a different *point* of view."

Hey, that's good. Better, in fact, than my own. I was going to revive "The Misanthrope's Corner," but then I opted for a fresh start. I considered "The Half-Empty Glass" but it sounded strained. Then I remembered the trouble I had with the teacher in my junior-high sewing class who made fun of my hemline in front of everybody. "Our friend Florence," she said, her mouth twitching, "must have used bent pins."

Revenge is sweet, saith the Lord.

Speaking of school, I made the mistake of going to Wal-Mart when the Commonwealth of Virginia declared a tax-free shop-a-thon called School Supplies Day. Stuck in line behind shell-shocked parents, I watched as the woman in front of me unloaded a cart piled with pseudo-scholarly glitz, including something that looked like the dashboard of a jet plane encased in a blister pack so thick she would need a chainsaw to open it. Her total came to \$276 but she smiled in relief—no state tax! She included me in her happiness. "The older they get, the more they need!" she chortled brightly.

"I know," I said. I did. Starting in second grade I had to add a set of pen nibs and a bottle of ink to my spiral composition book because we were set

to learn penmanship. A pen nib was inserted into a wooden holder and had a flattened point to make shaded capitals. The shape of the point forced us to form nice flowing letters because if we bunched them up the nib went all scratchy and dry. Best of all, though, was the effect of having an open bottle of ink on our desks: *It made us sit still!*

School-as-metaphor dominated the Minneapolis bridge collapse. That damn schoolbus hanging over the side dominated the coverage. It was the last photo we saw before every station break and the first one they showed when they came back—a 24-7 hosanna to the "chiiilldrunn," as female reporters say. Then came the parents and grandparents and any other relatives guaranteed to cry in public—the "fammalees," in news parlance. On and on it went, from the Minneapolis bridge to the Utah coal mine.

"How are the fammalees holding up? . . . Talk about the fammalees . . . an interview with one of the fammalees."

Meanwhile, at some point in all this, Beverly Sills died, but I learned of it only because I happened to see it on the crawl. In a culturally polished country the streets would have filled with crowds following her coffin as the French did when Victor Hugo died, but ours is the land of chiiilldrunn and fammalees.

I sounded like a liberal there, didn't I? Talking up the French and lit'ra-choor and all that. I'm sometimes accused of being a liberal by thornier readers who regard themselves as self-appointed guardians of conservatism, so if any of you are cranking up, let me give you my standard, entirely truthful response: I believe in absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings—now let's see you get to the right of that.

You may think it odd for an agnostic to come down on the side of divinity, but I can't be worried about schizophrenia now because I'm busy splitting

something else. The doctor keeps changing the dosage of my blood-thinning med so I had to buy something I never expected to own: a pill splitter.

Healthcare strikes again. I cut my finger on the thing. For a moment I was scared, but the contretemps was too good to waste on fear. The only ailment I don't have is irony deficiency, so my obit flashed through my mind: "She bled to death while adjusting her anti-clotting medication." I poured some gin on the cut and applied a band-aid. A few days later I ran into an acquaintance and told her about it.

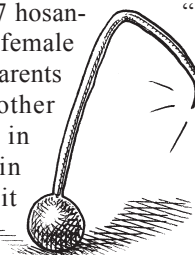
"Isn't that funny?" I chuckled.

Her brows met gently in that unmistakable furrow of the humorless. "Funny?" she repeated hurtfully. This is a woman who used to "facilitate" one of those laughter-is-the-best-medicine workshops at the hospital. That's the kind of country we live in.

The summer's greatest irritant has been cleavage. What offends me is seeing it all over TV in the morning and early afternoon. Whatever happened to Etiquette 101? Cleavage is for evening only. Showing it earlier *simply isn't done*, and furthermore, *everybody* knows it. Except in a democracy, where everything is done and nobody knows the difference.

Now that we have shoved every college grad into the upper middle class, we are overrun with slatternly standards. The Neo-Cleavage has nothing of femininity and desirability about it, but is comparable to the peacockery of vulgar men who deliberately wear too-tight swimming trunks. It is one more proof that our world has lost the kind of exquisite sensibility displayed by John Milton when he came up with his definition of poetry. He first wrote "simple, sensual, and passionate," but he was bothered by the grossness inherent in "sensual," and so he invented the word "sensuous." A vital distinction once, but now we have no further use for it.

NR



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HELLO!!!

SEX AND THE ELDERLY

Viagra's flying off the shelves
As Gramps and Grandma, by themselves
And daytime TV such a bore,
Begin to stare, begin to score;
While Democrats with memories
Of Monica show some unease
Wondering if First Laddie Bill
Will scratch an itch "over the hill."

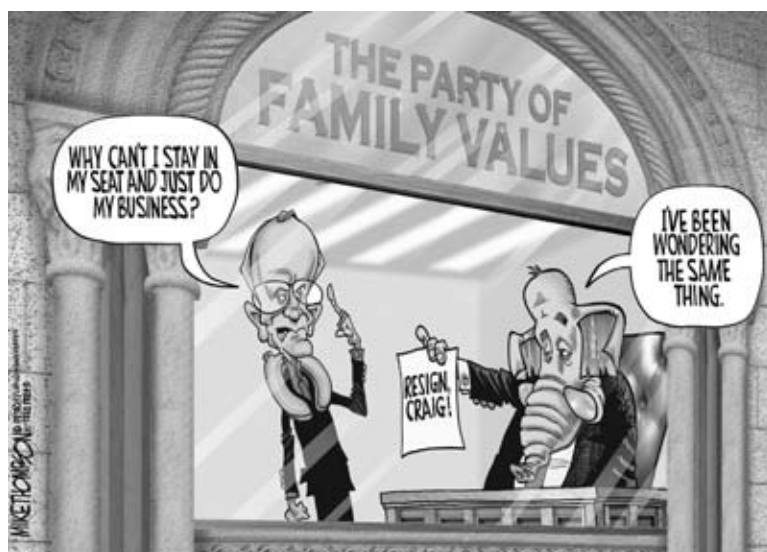
—W. H. VON DREELE



ATTENTION SPAN THERAPY CENTER



"Are we done yet?"



the long view

ROB LONG

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Republicans
FROM: RNC Media Strategy Team
RE: Appearing Less Gay

Dear Republican lawmakers:

As summer draws to a close, I know we're all eager to get back to business and put recent events behind us. Autumn is a great time to "turn the page," as we say in the media biz, and it's a perfect opportunity to do some image tune-ups!

We here on the media-strategy team are super excited about Autumn '07, and we're dedicated to helping you and your staff appear less gay. As you all are aware, this autumn the House and Senate will be taking up budget resolutions, health-care issues, the war in Iraq, and many other crucial issues, so it's important that as a party, we appear a little less gay than we currently do.

The media-strategy team has spent the past week measuring the Gay-Seeming Index of the party as a whole. Through in-person interviews, phone polling, and focus groups in such gay enclaves as Fire Island, Provincetown, and L.A., our data reveal that the Republican party's GSI has never been higher, with the possible exception of the appearance of The Singing Senators in 1996.

There are benefits to this, obviously. A "little bit of gay," like a few dashes of Tabasco sauce, can liven up an otherwise dull-seeming party. The style, panache, sarcasm, and willingness to "go there" that are the hallmarks of the colorful, vibrant gay lifestyle can be welcome additions to a political party's media profile.

Still, a party that seems overly gay runs the risk of narrowing its broader appeal. It's a balancing act. Your media-strategy team has compiled a few guidelines for

you to peruse yourself, and share with your staff. Call it the Goldilocks Gay List: How To Get It Just Right™:

1. The Men's Room:

By all means, maintain a friendly, outgoing demeanor at all times, including when using the public restroom. Although recent events may discourage you from using the public facilities at the airport, constituents appreciate an approachable lawmaker, and the Republican party is justly recognized as the party of the little guy, the small businessman, the ordinary American. Democrats are perceived as snooty, snobbish, and elite know-it-alls who prefer expensive airline clubs to the "free" areas in the terminal. But while we suggest that you all continue to take every available opportunity to use the public toilet facilities, we also caution you to maintain a blandly cheerful expression, and to focus your eyes, as much as possible, on the middle distance. Do not make eye contact, tap your foot (even if it has paper stuck to the bottom; better to look foolish than elevate the GSI), or otherwise "single out" another person for specific attention. A relaxed, friendly attitude of "Hey, isn't this great that we're all in this men's room together?" is the right way to negotiate the dangers of the facilities.

2. "Chatting" Online with Pages and Interns

Mentoring the young people who come to Washington to learn and experience our nation's unique and long-lasting form of government is both a duty and a privilege. Republicans have a well-earned reputation of being thoughtful and committed advisers to their young interns, pages, and unpaid staffers. Still, recent events have cast a very different

light on the (totally natural) attention a lawmaker may show to a young person in the office. Late-night computer chats, suggestive banter, potent cocktails—these can be perceived as "inappropriate" by a media pack that insists on seeing something "dirty" or "wrong" in a middle-aged man with vaguely effeminate characteristics taking an interest in the social life of a 17-year-old boy. Crazy, yes, but these are the times we live in. So your media-strategy team

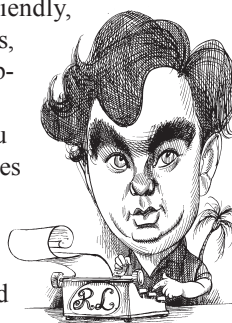
recommends that whenever possible, you confine your mentoring, late-night chit-chats, drinking parties, and suggestive banter exclusively to pages, interns, and unpaid staffers of the opposite sex. In fact, in an effort to reduce the party's overall GSI, we suggest that every Republican lawmaker initiate such behavior immediately.

3. Gay or Gay-ish Staffers

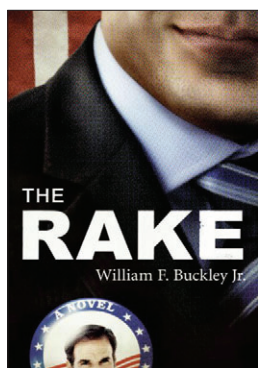
Gay staffers are a welcome addition to any lawmaker's office. They represent a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and they also can be relied upon to help the lawmaker maintain a low-carb lifestyle and keep abreast of Tony Award nominations. And yet, it would be wise to maintain a certain social distance between yourself and your overtly gay staffers. Friendly lunches and dinners, of course, are perfectly understandable. Working vacations can be easily explained. Sharing an apartment, dancing together, pricing friendship rings, whimsical pet names like "Liberace" or "Siegfried & Roy"—no one of these is enough to tip the GSI, but together they can be twisted by an unfriendly media into a complicated and ultimately unwinnable set of explanations. Better to avoid the whole mess.

We hope these guidelines will help you and your colleagues as we begin a challenging legislative year! With fond but deeply heterosexual good wishes,

Your Media Strategy Team



All Too Human



The Rake, by William F. Buckley Jr.
(HarperCollins, 288 pp., \$24.95)

SARAH BRAMWELL

FORGET for a moment that *The Rake* is the 18th novel and 48th book of one of the most illustrious living American writers. Pretend instead that it's the first effort of an unknown. What would one say? The question is—almost—easy to answer: first, that *The Rake* is a most agreeable read; that its themes of lust, ambition, betrayal, and downfall cannot fail to entice; that the author's wit sparkles; and that he has mastered the book's historical background, namely, '60s radicalism, the Reagan years, and the early 1990s period that brought Clinton to the presidency.

After noting these qualities, the reviewer might express bafflement. Obviously Buckley is a prodigious talent, and yet . . . what writer of his caliber asks only that readers enjoy themselves? *The Rake's* plot never slackens, its descriptions never drag, its characters come quickly to life. Who is this young man who so obviously can make a huge impression yet feels content simply to entertain?

Of course, *The Rake* is not the first effort

of an unknown and we know perfectly well the answer to the question. The author, by his own admission, keeps writing just to keep himself amused. Well, in *The Rake* he surely succeeded—and the book is as fun to read as it must have been to write.

Which is not to say that, if pressed, one cannot gather some weightier lessons from the novel. Walter Lippmann, to whom Buckley makes glancing reference, once claimed that in a democracy "successful politicians are insecure and intimidated men" who advance politically only as they "placate, appease, bribe, seduce, bamboozle or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding and threatening elements in their constituencies." To hunger for glory is to wish to distinguish oneself from mankind—yet, in modern democracy, one sets oneself apart only by winning their favor. Hence, with rare exceptions, our leading politicians have a pitiful aspect. A man like Al Gore or John Kerry may despise the ordinary people whose favor he seeks, yet must summon all his restraint to hide the fact. (We'll see if Hillary Clinton manages to do it in 2008.)

The Rake tells the story of Reuben Hardwick Castle, a North Dakotan who rises from obscurity to the U.S. Senate and nearly wins the Democratic nomination in 1992. He has no real-life analogue (this is not a book about William Jefferson Clinton), yet his character is familiar to us all.

He begins as a charming, even likable person. But his is the fast charm of a restless man, more an involuntary emotional tic than evidence of underlying warmth. We see Castle in 1967 as a freshman at the University of North Dakota, where he is vying for a position on the college newspaper. Buckley writes, "He was by nature competitive but also adroit about the expenditure of energy. . . . He reasoned that by a shrewd application of practical and psychological intelligence he could increase the prospects of success, while diminishing the pains of achieving it." Castle reasons correctly, and rises through the ranks of college life: editor-in-chief of the newspaper, class president, leading protester of the Vietnam War, and all-around man about campus.

But in the reader's first encounter with

Castle, he is bent on conquest of another sort: bedding his girlfriend, Henrietta. In this ambition, he begrudges no expense of energy—and, as always, he is successful. A little too successful, it turns out: The pregnant (and naïve) Henrietta elicits from Castle a promise to be honorable. It does not shock the reader, though it does Henrietta, when after a few months Castle "moves on" as though nothing—and no one—had happened.

And move he does: Castle ships off to Vietnam, attends law school, enters politics, marries Miss America, and begins a steady and seemingly unstoppable climb up the greasy pole of American public life. But no sooner does Castle begin his final ascent than things start to unwind. While Castle doesn't slip, Don Giovanni-like, into the pit, he nonetheless meets the appropriate media-age equivalent.

In another time, a Reuben Castle would wade through slaughter to the throne; in ours, the public harm he does is minimal. The genius of our political system is that the same can be said of nearly every spirited man who has the (mis)fortune of being born an American. But though the Castles of the world may be neutered so as to protect the public, *The Rake* reminds us that the private harm they do can still be enormous.

The Rake is a "political novel," in that it's about a politician, with scenes at political rallies and on campaign trails. But there's little policy and even less ideology. What the reader sees is the personal wreckage caused by one man's quest for power: the alcoholic wife, the cast-off pregnant girlfriend, the abandoned son, the personal adviser driven to a criminal act, and, in the end, the loss of a human life. An ambitious man—even one with the best of intentions and the highest of scruples, which is certainly not Reuben Castle's situation—must to some extent compromise those closest to him in his pursuit of glory.

Despite the heavy passions at play, the book is full of light-heartedness. For example, Buckley pokes fun at the signature vices of the late-'60s generation—false spontaneity, selfish indulgence in loose morals—with "Zip to Zap Day," one of Castle's college schemes. Thousands of students descend on the farming town of Zap, N.D. (population: 450), to manifest their youth through beer and rock music. When after a few days food runs low and the weather turns cold, the organizers urge

everyone to leave. But no one budges, and the National Guard is called in to calm “the first ‘riot’ ever officially recorded in North Dakota.”

If you read what the publisher says about this book, and what other reviewers have written, you will hear that *The Rake* is a novelistic treatment of Bill Clinton. It is, of course, difficult to avoid thinking of Clinton, given Buckley’s penchant for the roman à clef, not to mention the winkingly worded jacket cover. Indeed, it’s hard to ignore echoes of “Hillary Rodham Clinton” in the name “Reuben Hardwick Castle”; and few Americans could fail to recognize their 42nd president in Reuben as he is about to make love: “His voice took on the habitual hoarseness. ‘You wanting a little loving?’”

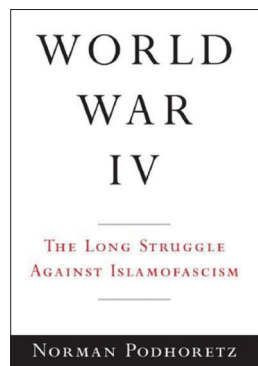
For the most part, though, the parallels stop there. Castle marries a beauty queen, volunteers for Vietnam, and achieves no scholarly distinction. In almost every particular he is the antithesis of Bill Clinton. But Buckley does use Clinton’s iconic presence in his readers’ mind to create a shorthand for a character: Castle is a paradigm of the calculating politician and “perpetual office seeker” (to quote Lippmann again), of the kind familiar to us all. Reuben Castle isn’t exactly like Bill Clinton, John F. Kennedy, John Kerry, or Al Gore—but they are a lot like him.

Still, the character of Reuben Castle remains hard to decipher. He must have a soul, but of what does it consist? Perhaps he has no real nature, just a collection of drives—sexual, political. Buckley seems to be saying that public men, to borrow from T. S. Eliot, are so busy preparing faces to meet the faces that they meet that they don’t know who they really are. Buckley writes, “He had this difficulty, which many first-rate politicians caught up in the theater of politics have, namely that he was not sure what was in fact natural.”

Unlike many of Buckley’s previous novels, *The Rake* is not a roman à clef. Readers looking for Buckley’s judgment on historical figures will be disappointed. *The Rake* is, if anything, closer to his famous spy series: Just as Blackford Oakes was Buckley’s take on the spy hero, so Reuben Castle is his take on the political villain. And if that’s the case, then we may have a sequel to look forward to. After all, no tale of a political fall is complete without a comeback.

NR

Podhoretz At War



*World War IV:
The Long Struggle Against
Islamofascism*, by Norman Podhoretz
(Doubleday, 240 pp., \$24.95)

JAY NORDLINGER

EVERYONE who writes has written about the war: both the general War on Terror and the particular war in Iraq. And Norman Podhoretz has written his share. He has now put his thoughts between hard covers, and has done so with his typical care and verve. No one expresses the Podhoretzian view better than Podhoretz himself. And that view, incidentally, is shared by the president of the United States. Whether it will be shared by the next one is most unclear.

Back in 2002, Podhoretz gave a major speech at a major conservative dinner in Washington. To be specific, this was February 2002; a scant five months after the attacks of 9/11; a little more than a year before the launch of the Iraq War. What Podhoretz said, basically, was that domestic opposition to the president’s efforts might build, and that it could be ugly and ruinous, as before. In Vietnam days, Podhoretz remembered, the Left was relatively small but mighty: “It blew and it blew and it blew the house down.” The house of what? In brief, the house of American culture and purpose as we had known it.

At that dinner and in the days to follow, many conservatives rolled their eyes.

They did so in print, and, even more, they did so in private. “Poor old Norman,” they said. “Doesn’t he know that we’re all united now? Doesn’t he know that 9/11 *changed everything*? He is stuck in the past—fighting the last war. The old Cold Warrior totally misreads today’s mood.”

Unfortunately, the old Cold Warrior was prescient in his warnings. As he writes in his new book, the current anti-war movement is a “virtual clone” of the one we knew back when. As before, there are respectable elements in it; but they are overshadowed by the ugly, paranoid, and defamatory. And these nasty or hallucinatory elements are not confined to the fringes.

Like you—and like Norman Podhoretz—I could provide a thousand examples. But let me restrict myself to just one. On June 23, 2004, Michael Moore’s movie, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, had its Washington premiere at the Uptown Theatre. A who’s who of the Democratic establishment was there: Senate leader Tom Daschle, many of his colleagues, such party elders as Ted Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. When the lights came back up, NATIONAL REVIEW’s Byron York, who was covering the event, questioned Terry McAuliffe, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Did McAuliffe believe the movie? Did he believe, specifically, that President Bush went to war in Afghanistan, not to overthrow the Taliban, not to rout al-Qaeda, but to benefit business cronies who were itching to build a natural-gas pipeline? McAuliffe said yes: “I believe it after seeing that” (the movie).

And such feelings and tics are not to be found solely on the left; they exist on the right, too.

Podhoretz is one of our finest analysts of feelings and tics, from either direction. He was born in Brooklyn, in 1930, and had an early reputation as a literary critic. He is still a literary critic. But “human events,” in the words of the Declaration, demanded his attention. He might have preferred to write about Shakespeare, Milton, and Conrad; but conscience told him to spend most of his time on Vietnam, the Middle East, and the like. For 35 years, he edited *Commentary*, retiring in 1995. Since then, he has issued a mini-explosion of books: about one every two years. That is

merely half the Buckleyan pace, but industrious.

If anyone might be called a “neoconservative,” it is Podhoretz. He was one of the originals: a leader of the band of intellectuals who crossed from left to right. But he retired the term “neoconservative” in 1996; he actually delivered a speech entitled “Neoconservatism: A Eulogy.” The term had outlived its usefulness, he said, and it had lost true meaning. After 9/11, however, others emphatically unretired this term. Now it is bandied about in the most astonishing and appalling ways. In his new book, the old neocon marvels at that.

He calls this book *World War IV*—his designation for, as he puts it in his subtitle, “The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism.” (Rather than just “Long,” he might have said “Long, Twilight”—speaking of Ted Sorensen.) In Podhoretz’s scheme, World War III was the Cold War, to which the current struggle is the successor. A lot of people accuse such people as Podhoretz of *wishing* for such a war, or struggle—and *enjoying* it. Podhoretz et al. say, “No: We hardly wish it, or enjoy it. What we do is face up to it when it arises.”

Podhoretz is bothered by the term “War on Terror,” finding it euphemistic, or evasive. I, for one, have no objection: “Cold War” was a strange, limited, and, in some respects, inaccurate term—as Podhoretz writes—but we all knew what it meant: the worldwide competition between Communism, led by the Soviet Union, and democracy, or freedom, led by the United States. Similarly, we all know what “War on Terror” means. For example, the “terror” in question does not arise from Irishmen.

In any case, *World War IV* is an invaluable book: part primer, part polemic, part plea. It is an impressive feat of synthesis. Podhoretz tells us how we got where we are, and where we might go from here. One of his aims, he says, is to “confront and clear away the many misconceptions, distortions, and outright falsifications that have been perpetrated” in the years

since 9/11. In general, Podhoretz’s tone is patient, rather than insistent or hectoring (or polemical). It was said of William Safire that, on Nixon’s speechwriting team, he was “the explainer.” Podhoretz is an explainer too. *World War IV* is a cousin of his 1982 book, *Why We Were in Vietnam* (also invaluable).

Laying out the new work, Podhoretz reminds us of events and persons we may have forgotten about. Jihadism has been waged against Americans steadily since

Khomeini’s revolutionary victory in 1979. I myself had forgotten about Robert Stethem, the Navy diver who was tortured and murdered—and whose corpse was tossed out onto a Beirut tarmac. And, switching gears, do you remember the name Richard A. Clarke? I had let it slip away. Clarke was the National Security Council staffer who, only yesterday, was a star of the blame-Bush crowd.

Elsewhere, Podhoretz defines and explains the Bush Doctrine—a widely misunderstood cluster of policies and principles. He dissects the media. He explores “varieties of anti-Americanism.” He navigates the differing schools of foreign policy: the “liberal internationalist,” the “realist,” and so on. And he proves that many Americans, some of them esteemed, are rooting for the defeat of the United States, certainly in Iraq. How does he do this? By quoting them.

In a chapter called “Defeatism on the Right,” Podhoretz takes on his conservative opponents (who include some of our best friends!). In doing so, he is frank but fair, and these other conservatives will surely give as good as they have gotten.

Podhoretz is especially valuable on the connection between culture and politics. In a brilliant few pages—almost a set-piece—he shows how a small group of cultural elites can influence a whole, mass society. There is a “trickle-down effect,” and, “drip by drip,” these poisonous intellectuals and artists win. Amazing. Podhoretz is also on-the-ball when he recounts the debate over weapons of mass destruction. He is painstaking, thorough, and, I believe, unassailable. He is not content to issue

Olympian statements. Other septuagenarians might be tempted to do so; indeed, many twentysomethings do so. But Podhoretz has done a ton of work.

And he always keeps in mind the big picture. He decries the “fixation” on America’s mistakes, and Bush’s mistakes. He is also crystal-clear about what this fixation is intended to do. Were mistakes made in the Battle of the Bulge? Colossal ones were—but this was an episode in an all-important war. Podhoretz is for honest criticism, rather than the kind that tears down an entire, worthy house.

It does him and his cause no harm that he is eloquent—phenomenally so. The book is a treat to read, from a strictly literary point of view. Those who agree with Podhoretz are lucky to have his pen on their side. And those who disagree with him, if they read him, will at least experience first-class prose.

One man who should appreciate this book is George W. Bush—a virtually friendless president who has an unflinching and fearless friend in Norman Podhoretz. Even a noble friend. Podhoretz compares Bush to Reagan, which is common, but, even more, he compares him to Truman. Truman was president at the start of “World War III,” just as Bush has been the first president of “World War IV.” Particularly interesting is what Podhoretz has to say about Bush’s speeches—the world underrates them and misrepresents them, to say the least.

In his epilogue, Podhoretz addresses a burning question: Can we win? That is, can we win both the Iraq War and the larger War on Terror? Podhoretz says yes: He is an optimist, believing that the American spirit is not spent, that the country can keep producing Greatest Generations. Of at least equal importance, he argues that we really have no choice: Either we succeed—we win—or a kingdom of sorrow comes down on our head.

It may be asked whether anyone will listen to Norman Podhoretz. He may have had important things to say in the Cold War, but what does he have to tell us now? He has much to tell us, and this includes many of the same things. People may not listen to him; but they would be wrong. And, in writing about the extended crisis that has been visited upon us, he may have neglected Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest, but he has done his duty.

NR

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the kind
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down an
entire,
worthy
house.**

Not of This World

The Political Teachings of Jesus,
by Tod Lindberg (HarperCollins,
272 pp., \$25.95)

JOHN WILSON

EDITOR of *Policy Review* and a frequent contributor to *The Weekly Standard* and similar journals of opinion, Tod Lindberg is the not the first man you'd expect to see adding his bit to the Jesus-and-politics genre. But here he is, entering the lists with a book whose merits quickly distinguish it from most of the others on that overcrowded shelf. Lindberg has something fresh to say. He says it with exceptional clarity, solicitous of his readers even to the point of occasionally tedious repetition. And he's blessedly free of the impulse to huff and puff, which seems to be endemic to the genre. This is a book that genuinely invites engagement, and I can't imagine a reader interested in the subject failing to profit from *The Political Teachings of Jesus*—even those who end up as I did, finding Lindberg's account of our world not entirely plausible.

Lindberg argues that the core political commitments largely shared by Western democracies today—above all the principle of “equality in freedom”—derive primarily from the teachings of Jesus. He adds, quite correctly, that one needn't be a Christian to accept these commitments, and that Christians, alas, often fail to live up to those teachings themselves. Moreover, Lindberg wants to differentiate Jesus's “political teachings” (“his guidance for people about how to live in *this* world and how to build a just society among themselves”) from his “religious teachings” (“pertaining to such matters as the immortality of the soul, divine judgment, salvation and damnation, and so on”). Hence the references throughout the book to the politics of Jesus as “the Jesusian teaching,” emphasizing Lindberg's particular angle of approach.

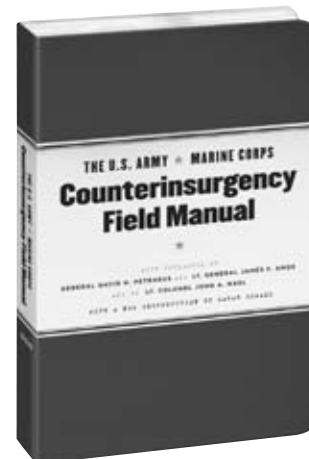
Mr. Wilson is the editor of *Books & Culture*, a bimonthly review.

In making this move, Lindberg is keen to insist, he is *not* following liberal Christians who simply explain away what he calls “the explicitly religious element” in Jesus's teaching, which they regard as an embarrassment. Rather he is bracketing out such matters to open up the conversation. Nor, he hastens to say, is he taking sides with those who seek Biblical warrant for their position in this or that “current partisan controversy.” To be sure, the Jesusian teaching has “profound [political] implications,” but to grasp them “we need to broaden our understanding of what ‘politics’ is from the set of political questions that confront 21st-century Americans.”

And so Lindberg devotes the bulk of the book to a close reading of Jesus's words—especially the Sermon on the Mount and selected parables—teasing out recurring themes that all are rooted in reciprocity: “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you” (Matt. 7:12). What emerges is a very appealing picture of an “expanding community of goodwill,” a notion that's given a historical dimension in the two concluding chapters. In Lindberg's account, the vision articulated in Jesus's teaching, at first seemingly quixotic, marginal, of no great significance, has slowly gained ground across the centuries, penetrating so deeply that many people are unaware of its origins. “In our day,” Lindberg writes, “the principle of equality in freedom governs most of the modern world. It is for this reason that we can say with some degree of confidence that the United States will never go to war with Germany or France, nor will France ever go to war with Germany again.” Indeed, he says, these countries and others have achieved, among themselves at least, a “permanent peace,” unprecedented “since the beginning of time.”

With peace has come prosperity, so that “in the prosperous, developed world—the world in which the political teaching of Jesus is most firmly entrenched—we have now solved many of the problems that gave rise to a felt need for miracles [in Jesus's day]. The miraculous is now ordinary, enjoyed to a point at which it is hardly worth remarking.” The great challenge, then, is for the developed world to share the fruits of this prosperity with the billions of people who remain mired in misery. At the same time, we must resolutely

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maintain the conditions that have made prosperity possible in the first place against the threat posed by “radical changes in the international environment” (here Lindberg seems to be alluding to the rise of radical Islam). Even in such a confrontation, we should seek—insofar as it is possible—to further extend the boundaries of the community of goodwill, making it truly universal.

Well. There’s much that’s right and good here, and yet, when all is said and done, neither the Jesus whom Lindberg gives us nor the “modern world” as he describes it rings quite true. Lindberg’s Jesus, with the rough edges of his parables sanded off so as not to give offense, strangely resembles John Rawls. Explicating the parable of the sower, for example, Lindberg spends a lot of time on metaphors of growth and the way that those who truly understand Jesus’s teaching become sowers themselves. This is nice, but it’s tangential to the thrust of the parable, which emphasizes a variety of responses to Jesus’s teaching, most of them unsatisfactory. Of course Lindberg must finally acknowledge this aspect of the story, and here’s how he goes about it: “Unfortunately, not everyone hears. For one reason or another, some fail to capitalize on their full potential.” And so on.

After reading this gloss, in which Lindberg seems to be applying the hermeneutics of John Shelby Spong, I went back and read the familiar parable—and Jesus’s own explanation of it to his puzzled disciples, an explanation which is harshly matter-of-fact. The contrast with Lindberg’s summary is stark. It’s worth mentioning, too, that Jesus’s explanation of the parable of the sower—as also his gloss on the parable of the wheat and the tares, which Lindberg also explicates at length—frames his message explicitly in terms of conflict with the Devil, “the evil one,” a dimension that Lindberg, according to his ground rules, is obliged to ignore.

Many New Testament scholars distrust the passages in which Jesus glosses his parables, arguing that such explanations were added *ex post facto* and—though they are attributed directly to him—shouldn’t be treated as his words. Perhaps Lindberg is following their lead. But even

if we attend only to the parables, the Jesus whose voice we hear is a good deal fiercer, more enigmatic, and far more resistant to modern secular conceptions of justice than the sage of Lindberg’s Jesusian tradition. And this is exactly what we might expect from a project that attempts, with all goodwill, to sustain an artificial distinction between Jesus’s “religious teaching” and his teaching about “this world.”

Still more questionable, I think, is Lindberg’s reading of the trajectory of modern history. On one hand, at a moment when apocalyptic pronouncements are a dime a dozen, it’s refreshing to encounter a thoughtful dissenter, making a case for

DON’T WORRY

We knew you were here
and there at the same time,
that you never left, really,
or lost sight of what needed doing.

No one ever sat in your chair
at the head of the table
or put your things away.
We knew you were still there.

It was imagined loss
that caused the grieving
and that deep, unspoken
love for your being.

It was your voice,
wasn’t it, that urged
us inwardly toward
a subtle shift in choice.

We lost track of how many times
we heard it,
that soft inclination
to move in a certain way.

We sensed you under the trees
at twilight, scattering feed,
listening to doves coo.
We sat with you,

and still do
knowing as the evening wind
moves from us to you
and back again,

making us a little lighter,
less here,
and you, heavier,
less there.

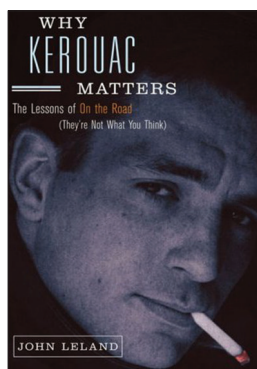
—OLIVIA ELLIS

“the increasing fulfillment *in this world* of the promise of the human condition as such.” When Lindberg remarks that “our ability to do certain remarkable things—curing forms of cancer, making people’s daily bread available at reasonable cost at the corner supermarket, saving babies born 17 weeks prematurely—is . . . in no small measure a product of the beneficial effects of the Jesusian teaching,” we are reminded to pay attention to what is easily taken for granted. And *The Political Teachings of Jesus* is not blandly naïve about the state of things: “For much of the world,” Lindberg acknowledges, “human misery is not distinguishable from that of two millennia ago, if indeed it is not worse.”

And yet there is a utopian cast to Lindberg’s project, evident not least in his idealized account of “modern democracy” but more strongly apparent in his argument, near the very end of the book, that “what Jesus is proposing is *a world without enemies*,” a revolutionary abandonment of a “category of relations” that “dates to the origin of the human.” But nowhere can I find Jesus proposing any such thing *in this world*, to adopt Lindberg’s chosen formulation. We are indeed commanded to *love* our enemies, but the New Testament witness—in Jesus’s teaching, in the letters of Paul, and so on across the board—is that in this world we will always *have* enemies, caught up as we are in a cosmic conflict. A quick look around suggests that this is so.

Seen in that light, not to mention the events Lindberg subsumes in a rather euphemistic phrase (“after considerable struggle in the 20th century,” meaning I suppose Hitler, Stalin, etc.), the “permanent peace” that presently obtains among the Western democracies is perhaps not such a big deal. We may be near the End of History, or we may yet be in an early chapter. To see such alternatives in the light of eternity is not to belittle the significance of our life in this world—a temptation, to be sure, but not one to which most Americans, Christian or otherwise, appear to be succumbing. Meanwhile we muddle along, debating the merits of a tax increase, worrying about health care, holding our noses and voting for president, clear at least about this: *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you.* **NR**

The Right Beat



Why Kerouac Matters: The Lessons of On the Road (They're Not What You Think), by John Leland (Viking, 224 pp., \$23.95)

KELLY JANE TORRANCE

THE rebel, in all his incarnations, has long been misunderstood. Jack Kerouac, on the other hand, has long been misunderstood as a rebel—50 years, to be exact, ever since the publication in September 1957 of his second and best-known novel, *On the Road*. At least that's what *New York Times* reporter John Leland argues in his new book. Now, when a critic says that, for decades, the real meaning of a book “has eluded most readers”—but not that critic himself—one prepares for an idiosyncratic, agenda-pushing reading that bears little resemblance to the author's intent. But not in this case: Leland is, broadly speaking, absolutely right.

On the Road made Kerouac an overnight success, and the voice of an age he himself named: the Beat generation. The novel details four cross-country trips made by narrator Sal Paradise, usually accompanied by his larger-than-life buddy Dean Moriarty, in search of jazz, girls, and drugs; it quickly became a countercultural tract, rousing countless youngsters to take to the road and inspiring the hippies of the 1960s to cast off conformity. Bob Dylan recounts

Kelly Jane Torrance is an arts and entertainment writer at the *Washington Times* and fiction editor of *Doublethink*.

in *Chronicles: Volume One* that *On the Road*, with its “‘hungry for kicks’ hipster vision,” had been “like a bible” for him when he first arrived in New York.

Kerouac would have none of it. He denounced the hippies, in no uncertain terms, as “anti-American, America-haters of all kinds with placards who call themselves ‘beatniks’”; he even, Leland notes, “declare[d] William F. Buckley his hero.” Kerouac's protestations had little effect. *On the Road* still sells almost 100,000 copies a year in the U.S., mostly to readers hoping to experience the thrill of rebellion.

Now comes Leland, to argue that Kerouac and his thinly veiled memoir are, at heart, conservative. It's counterintuitive, of course, to think of Kerouac as carrying the flag for religious traditionalism. He had two failed marriages; according to her memoir, his second wife left him when he suggested she get an abortion; he met his daughter Janet only twice (the first time, when she was 10, was for the paternity test that put paid to his claims that he wasn't her father). But then, Kerouac never made a very good rebel, either: He lived with his hard-headed French-Canadian mother almost his entire life.

One might object that I am confusing the author with his work. But Kerouac initially intended to report the events of his road trips exactly as they happened, with real locations, dates, and names. In the draft of the book Kerouac wrote over three mad, caffeine-fueled weeks in April 1951—one long paragraph taped together into a 120-foot scroll—there was no Sal Paradise, Dean Moriarty, or Carlo Marx; there was Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, and poet Allen Ginsburg. Publishers asked Kerouac to change details to avoid libel suits.

On the anniversary of this putative novel, two new publications return it to the status of one of America's most honest memoirs. Viking is publishing *On the Road: The Original Scroll*, real names and excised scenes intact; Library of America is publishing *Road Novels 1957–1960*, in which helpful footnotes indicate the real-life counterparts of the fictional characters.

Leland's book has its own genre: It's a self-help guide to a self-help guide. *On the Road*, says Leland, offers lessons on work, friendship, love, and spirituality: “It survives because, like *The Road Less Traveled* or *The Purpose Driven Life*, it gives readers something they can use.”

One hopes Leland isn't as literal-minded

as he sounds. Life lessons, to put it crudely, might have something to do with the appeal of moralists like Jane Austen and George Eliot; but one wonders what such masterpieces as *Lolita* and Waugh's *Decline and Fall* give us that we “can use,” after the manner of the simply stated lessons of pop-spiritual tomes. *On the Road* survives, I would suggest, not because it's particularly helpful in navigating the stormy seas of life, but because of the allure of its singular voice: that of a man full of wonder at and wildly in love with all God's creation.

Leland's insistence on reading the book as an oh-so-relevant self-help manual has some unfortunate results. He believes it's a forerunner of just about every male-centered trend of the last 50 years: punk, the *Iron John* men's movement, and (his favorite) hip-hop. “And who are Sal and Dean if not two fatherless inner-city males who get profiled by the police, bend the Queen's English and largely ignore their baby-mamas (in Dean's case)? What could be more hip-hop?” he asks. But Sal is fatherless not because of the (still-to-come) breakdown of the family, but because his father is dead. Nonetheless, Leland carries on with the analogy: “Kerouac would have deplored the menace and materialism in hip-hop, but he would have saluted the verbal gymnastics and mythmaking and, of course, the hos.” But it's impossible to picture Sal the romantic in the middle of a rap video, surrounded by a harem of scantily clad women: Despite how under-drawn the book's female characters are, Sal is as interested in talking to them as he is in bedding them.

It's too bad that Leland feels the need to be hip in making an argument for Kerouac's essential anti-hipness; and that he sometimes stretches a little too far to turn *On the Road* into a traditionalist's manifesto—claiming, for example, that the constant theft of food and gas is thrust upon the novel's characters by circumstance. Too bad, because Leland gets the big picture right: In “Howl,” Ginsberg spoke of his friends as “angelheaded hipsters,” and the image is apt—God and the angels are never far from Sal's and Dean's minds, because they see evidence of Him all around them, in the great multiplicity of American life. “He was out of his mind with real belief,” Sal says of Dean's enthusiasm for experience.

“A Catholic without a church,” Leland writes of Kerouac, “he produced the form

of a religious allegory without the inconvenient doctrine.” It’s something of a wordless faith. As Dean says, “We both understand that I couldn’t have time to explain why I know and you know God exists.”

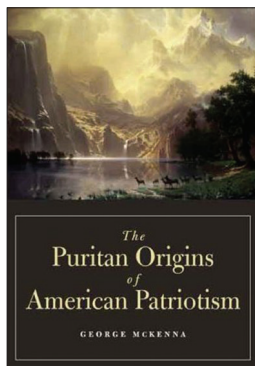
This form of spirituality reaches its apex during the last trip, to Mexico. Sal imagines the land of the Indians as the pre-modern birthplace of God. Innocent Indian girls have “eyes of the Virgin Mother when she was a child,” and “the tender and forgiving gaze of Jesus”: “‘Man, man,’ I yelled to Dean, ‘wake up and see the shepherds, wake up and see the golden world that Jesus came from, with your own eyes you can tell!’” Leland doesn’t miss the import of moments like this; and he points out, correctly, that many of the book’s readers have slighted them. “The book’s religious dimension has been overshadowed by the image of two wild and crazy guys. While hipsters have approved Kerouac’s self-taught Buddhism, they have largely ignored his devotion to the cross.” Kerouac himself said, in a private letter, “It was really a story about 2 Catholic buddies roaming the country in search of God. And we found him.”

Sal also found what he had been looking for the whole time: the love of a good woman. “I want to marry a girl,” he said, “so I can rest my soul with her till we both get old. This can’t go on all the time—all this franticness and jumping around. We’ve got to go someplace, find something.” Generations of readers were inspired by *On the Road* to take to the road, but many never seemed to realize how ambivalent the author felt about those journeys to nowhere. Indeed, his real dream seems rather prosaic: “All I hope, Dean, is someday we’ll be able to live on the same street with our families and get to be a couple of oldtimers together.”

For Kerouac himself, it was never to be. As Leland observes, Kerouac “never benefited from the lessons of Sal Paradise.” His marriages didn’t last; neither did his friendship with Cassady. Nor does Leland make much of the fact that the book ends with a betrayal. But then *On the Road*, like any interesting work of literature, cannot be boiled down to a twelve-step program. Leland has done us a service by demonstrating that it’s more than, as he says, “a backstory for the brand” of commercialized rebellion—a brand that (as William S. Burroughs remarked) has been selling jeans and espresso machines for decades.

NR

A New Kind Of Country



The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism, by George McKenna
(Yale, 448 pp., \$35)

MICHAEL POTEIRA

A FEW months ago, I was walking in a liberal neighborhood in Boston—or is that redundant? Anyway, I was brought up short by one of the gloomiest-looking bumper stickers I’d ever seen: It showed the Stars and Stripes, not in the customary bright colors but in especially drab black and white, accompanied by the words “SIN OF PRIDE.” I felt appropriately chastened, even though I didn’t know which specific national offenses had occasioned the motorist’s Puritanical wrath.

Puritanical? You bet. The bumper sticker was addressing contemporary politics in the severest language of moral chastisement and moral aspiration—and I think the Puritans who lived in that neighborhood some 350 years ago would have recognized in it the work of a kindred spirit.

One of the year’s best books, George McKenna’s *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism*, addresses the persistence of such Puritan habits of thought in American history. Don’t be discouraged by the title: The book is not a dry account of the political-philosophy debates of cheerless 17th-century Calvinist divines (which is an inaccurate stereotype, in any case), but an engaging narrative of the three subsequent centuries in America. McKenna, professor emeritus at City

College of the City University of New York, takes roughly 30 pages to explain Puritan thought in its own context—and then it’s off to the races, for an invigorating reading of how Puritan ideas have manifested themselves in American politics and culture.

“When the stakes are high,” writes McKenna, “American political leaders go back to the narrative and even the language of the Puritans. . . . It is Biblical, prophetic language, the language of sermons and jeremiads.” The phenomenon of nationalism is well-known in history: It basically involves believing my nation is right . . . because it’s *my* nation. What the Puritans were trying to establish was something new under the sun: a nation that would have to do without the crutch of nationalism, a nation called to live up to the standard of actually *being* right. When John Winthrop said we were to be “a City upon a Hill,” writes McKenna,

he meant it not as a boastful claim that New England was going to be a beacon to the world but rather as a warning that, as he put it, “the eyes of all people are upon us.” If America breaks its covenant, “we shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of this good land whither we are going.”

The Puritan/American sense of nationhood is thus the farthest thing imaginable from mere flag-waving jingoism.

What has long impressed foreign observers, McKenna correctly points out, “is that, unlike the patriotism of the Old World, [American patriotism] is not tied to blood or soil but is a dynamic blend of Judeo-Christianity and political liberalism.” And “dynamic” is certainly the key word: One of the book’s most arresting themes is that certain groups once demonized within the mainstream WASP culture eventually became pillars of old-fashioned patriotism.

To the original Puritans, Catholicism represented Antichrist; in the 1770s, their descendants’ anger at the British government’s Quebec Act—which granted religious liberty to Catholics in Canada—helped touch off the American Revolution. “Anti-Catholicism,” McKenna writes, “was not an adventitious element in American patriotic rhetoric, a prejudice that sometimes got attached to it, like

racial prejudice or anti-Semitism . . . but a foundational premise in the American narrative handed down by the Puritans.” The struggle against Catholicism was what political scientists today would call a fundamental “clash of civilizations.”

And yet behold: In 2007, Catholics are a demographic group especially noted for full-throated American patriotism, and evangelicals—the most vigorous branch within Protestantism, which is still the majority religion in the U.S.—largely view anti-Catholicism as a bigoted embarrassment from the distant past. What happened? Put simply, *America* happened. The Puritan narrative was convincing enough to assimilate Catholics successfully—and also flexible enough to let them remain Catholics.

Of all the transformations wrought by the alchemy of the Puritan paradigm—that combination of Judeo-Christianity with old-style liberalism—this is the one that would have appeared most remarkable to our 17th-century forebears. And it’s a good illustration of the distinctiveness of the American style of assimilation: The typical immigrant Catholic adapted to the American way of life without ceasing to be Catholic; the typical native-born Protestant learned to let go of ancient hatreds without ceasing to be Protestant. The result was an enrichment of both traditions.

McKenna recounts how the Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray—who had written, as late as 1938, that “our American culture, as it exists, is . . . a negation of all that Christianity stands for”—came to believe that the American system was actually grounded in a natural-law understanding that was fundamentally Catholic. This discerning analysis of the largely Protestant Founding later had global repercussions, as Murray was a key author of the Vatican II declaration endorsing religious liberty.

And it wasn’t just Catholics who transformed the culture while being transformed by it. In the 19th century, southerners were despised by many other Americans: Within abolitionism (a movement in which the Puritan heritage ran deep), some even rooted for an American defeat in the Mexican War as a deserved chastisement for the nation’s condoning of southern slavery. Yet today, the South—dramatically changed, yet maintaining somehow its traditional identity—has

substantial influence on the national culture, and is America’s most visibly patriotic region.

The Puritan language of moral improvement—of what McKenna calls the “craving for *purity*”—is a scarlet thread through all these events; the book follows it fascinatingly up until the present day. Characters as diverse as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abraham Lincoln, Whittaker Chambers, censor Anthony Comstock, Sixties radical

Staughton Lynd, and eugenicist Margaret Sanger illustrate it in their various ways: some heroic, some misguided, some even pernicious. McKenna’s judgments throughout are generous, and his book provides a memorable and thought-provoking account of the core national story: a sometimes limping, sometimes breakneck pursuit of the goodness to which America has been called from its earliest days. **NR**

■ SHELF LIFE ■

A COUPLE of decades ago, during the first Palestinian intifada, *The Economist* had a featured story titled “When Israel was a child.” The implication of the editors’ allusion to the prophet Hosea was clear, and harsh: When the state of Israel was young, a beleaguered underdog, it was favored—but now that Israel is a mature state, defending itself as all other mature states do, it has forfeited our support. The unjust and unreasonable double standard to which Israel is held by much of the world finds an echo within the Jewish political mind itself—and this is the subject of Ruth R. Wisse’s compelling new book *Jews and Power* (Schocken, 256 pp., \$19.95).

Wisse, a professor of Yiddish and comparative literature at Harvard, writes that the Jewish ambivalence about the exercise of power has its roots in two millennia of diaspora existence. The persecuted Jews were a perennially “burning bush” that was not consumed—and their “pride in sheer survival” had consequences: “The toleration of political weakness could cross the moral line into *veneration* of political weakness. Jews who endured exile as a temporary measure were in danger of mistaking it for a requirement of Jewish life or, worse, for a Jewish ideal.” The echoes are heard in the Israel of today: “Dictators and terrorists delight in parading their might: *vide* the military pageants of Iran, North Korea, and Hezbollah. Sovereign nations take pride in exhibiting their armed forces. But Israel invites its visiting foreign dignitaries to tour its Holocaust memorial, as if to say, *All we want is to be spared this fate.*”

The outlook for peace depends on the

normalization of Israel as an actor in world politics—and that, says Wisse, will require a continuing demonstration of “staying power” on the part of Israel and world Jewry.

■ “We walk by faith, not by sight”: Every generation needs to be reminded of these words of St. Paul, so the massive publicity being lavished on the new book of letters and papers of Mother Teresa is to be warmly welcomed. *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (Doubleday, 416 pp., \$22.95), edited by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, demonstrates that one of the most beloved saints of our time struggled with faith and doubt for many decades, even as she became a global role model for the love of one’s neighbor.

In these very frank writings, Mother Teresa refers to “darkness” as her “companion”; she strove to “become an apostle of Joy” to others even as she felt spiritually bereft.

In a 1961 letter, she confided that “I am not alone”—because “I have His darkness—I have His pain,—I have the terrible longing for God.” Note that she says *His* darkness—for this darkness was not mere oblivion but the painfully felt absence of the One Who Exists. This is the dark night of which St. John of the Cross wrote, the path to God of the great mystics—which Mother Teresa leavened with a touch of humility and gentle humor, writing in 1969: “The works of St. John of the Cross seem to be books I am able to understand a little & enjoy sometimes.” *A little*, and *sometimes*; this is the prose equivalent of a brave smile, until the Absent One becomes fully, palpably present—and All in All.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA



All's Fair



RICHARD BROOKHISER

LEAVES begin to fail before the cold touches them; they just wear out. The leaves of plane trees stiffen, and curl at the edges like newspapers that have been left outside. The fronds of locust trees mimic bottlebrushes, changing from supple to spiky. Time for the last street fairs of summer.

My stretch of Third Avenue is distinguished by its mediocrity. White-brick early-Beatles high rises mark the high end; stubby workers' housing a century older marks the low. There are fast-food places and slightly slower food places; bars that have risen from seediness without arriving at chic; a few magazine and cigar stores (look quick before they are shut down, as incitements to second-hand smoke). Any apartment in this neighborhood would cost a fortune. The day of the fair was a will-breaker: warm and sultry, like breathing into a hot wet towel. A witty man, a street musician, played "Summertime" on a saxophone. This, then, was the setting in which the vendors sought our custom.

New Yorkers on foot must be fed constantly, and every cuisine that has reached this city is beached on this strand to die. They proclaim their identities in blunt signs, to make up for lost flavor. The crêperies fly the tricolor; the tortilla sellers display the rampant eagle with the rattlesnake in its beak. The saddest advertising is Greek, or Hellenistic: GYROS it declares, and PITA. Some vendors illus-

trate these wares with repulsive pictures: The pita could have flown in from Roswell, the gyro looks like something you would be fined for not cleaning up. Was this the taste that launched a thousand merchant ships? The cleverest vendors sell the universal refreshment, bottled water and, for sophisticated palates, lemonade. Anything more on a day like this would be too much; anything less, death by dehydration.

There are tides of fashion that sweep through these events, understood no doubt by the suppliers, opaque to the public except by their results. For years you could count on buying socks and spices at any street fair; before that, used books. Now these items are as rare as subway tokens, their places taken by Asian junk. The Asian-junk sellers seem to have made a hostile takeover of African junk: long wooden masks and big metal Ethiopian crosses. But most of their stock is Buddha heads, yin yang symbols, "jade." As the quotation marks suggest, all the Asian junk was made yesterday, probably in the same sweat shop that produced the masks. No doubt it was in China. Count your blessings if you are not poisoned.

Other perennials remain hardy. The massage come-on. Asian touts ask you to sit down and lean your face into a padded toilet seat while they shuffle your vertebrae. Is it a front for a pseudo-religion? I have never inquired, or received a pseudo-massage. Poster art. Van Gogh meets "Nighthawks" meets Elvis in "Nighthawks." New this year are mob fusion posters, showing the Corleones together with the Sopranos, enjoying a summit in pop-culture heaven. Also new are images of Bettie Page, a Fifties pin-up girl. There was a movie about her recently, which got a full-court press from reviewers, ever willing to support titillation for the middle class. But there was a little too much feminist subtext in the film, which meant a little not enough anything good about it, and poor Bettie tanked at the box office, though she made it to Third Avenue. Scents and oils. What street fair would be complete without strange liquids and smoldering tapers? I see a bottle labeled ylang ylang. Wasn't that one of Nixon's pandas? Another label

so charms me I almost buy its bottle: Frank & Myrrh. As seen in the King Jim Bible. Did you forget to dress before you went out? That is never a problem at a street fair, where T-shirts abound, and your shoulders can be draped in a comfortable pashmina.

At every street fair you hope for the anomaly—the booth that is truly wayward, or a little too good. This afternoon there was a young artist selling prints and photographs. They were views of obvious places—the Piazza San Marco, Vesuvio Bakery in SoHo—but they were not bad. One of the photographs showed a Village storefront, laden with snow. I stared at it in rapture and misery.

Street fairs clog traffic, not as much as parading Dominicans and homosexuals, but enough to earn the ire of returning weekenders and their cabbies. Recently one young Indian driver taxed us with the irony. "They call them street fair, but they close the avenue." Why not hold them in Central Park, he asked? He does not understand the enormity of his suggestion: We just wrested Central Park from hos and muggers, give it a few years of grass before we consign it to gyros and pita. He is right to resent the frustration and expense of idling through detours.

The fair-goer can give him the great New York shrug: *not my problem, pal*.

An hour before closing time the sun has sunk and shadows slip over the western sidewalks, reaching for the middle of the street, forming a blessed tunnel of relief. (They weren't this long this early on the Fourth of July.) At the last moment, I see the hero of the day, the street-fair equivalent of the buff Spartans in 300: a vendor of sweet corn

singing his final offer like a cicada. *Sweet corna one dollar one dollar, closing time guys, one dollar sweet corna*. The police issue from their side-street precinct house, ready to move things along. The next hour will be filled with different sounds: the racket of street sweepers, the hollow pang of the metal scaffolding that holds up the vendors' displays and canopies, hitting the asphalt as it is disassembled. When the moon comes out, if the sky is clear enough to let it come out, it will be the size of a half-dollar. We're done.

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MARK STEYN

Pete's Big Joe Blues

IN the *New York Sun* the other day, Ron Radosh had a scoop: Hold the front page! Stop the presses! Grizzled Leftie Icon Repudiates . . .

Who? Castro? Chávez? Al-Qaeda?

Whoa, let's not rush to judgment. No, the big story was: Grizzled Leftie Icon Repudiates . . . Stalin.

A couple of months back, there was some documentary or other "celebrating" the "spirit" of Pete Seeger, the folkie colossus, with contributions from the usual suspects—Joan Baez, Bruce Springsteen, one or more Dixie Chicks, two-thirds of Peter, Paul, and Mary, etc. Mr. Radosh had also been interviewed but his remarks about Seeger's lifelong support of Stalinism had not made the final cut. No surprise there. In such circumstances, the rule is to hail someone for his "activism" and "commitment" and "passion" without getting hung up on the specifics of what exactly he's actively and passionately committing to.

Giving him a Kennedy Center Honor a decade or so back, President Clinton hailed ol' Pete as "an inconvenient artist who dared to sing things as he saw them," which is one way of putting it. You can't help noticing, though, that it's all the documentaries and honors ceremonies and lifetime-achievement tributes to Mr. Seeger that seem to find certain things "inconvenient." The *Washington Post's* Style section, with its usual sly élan, hailed him as America's "best-loved Commie"—which I think translates as "Okay, so the genial old coot spent a lifetime shilling for totalitarian murderers, but only uptight Republican squares would be boorish enough to dwell on it."

Anyway, in the *Sun*, Mr. Radosh, a former banjo pupil of the great man, *did* dwell on it, and a few weeks later got a letter in response. "I think you're right," wrote Pete. "I should have asked to see the gulags when I was in [the] USSR." And he enclosed a new song he'd composed:

*I'm singing about old Joe, cruel Joe
He ruled with an iron hand
He put an end to the dreams
Of so many in every land
He had a chance to make
A brand new start for the human race
Instead he set it back
Right in the same nasty place
I got the Big Joe Blues
(Keep your mouth shut or you will die fast)
I got the Big Joe Blues
(Do this job, no questions asked)
I got the Big Joe Blues . . .*

It's heartening to see that age (he's now 88) hasn't withered Seeger's unerring instinct for bum rhymes ("fast/asked"). Still, Ron Radosh was thrilled that, just 54 years after the old brute's death, a mere three-quarters of a century after the purges and show trials and whatnot, the old protest singer had finally got around to protesting Stalin, albeit somewhat evasively: He put the human race "right in the same nasty place"? Sorry, not good enough. Stalin created whole new degrees of nastiness. But, given that the guy got the two great conflicts of the 20th century wrong (in 1940, he was anti-war and singing "Wendell Willkie and Franklin D / Both agree on killing me"), it's a start. I can't wait for his anti-Osama album circa 2078.

Mr. Seeger has a song called "Treblinka," because he thinks it's important that we "never forget." But wouldn't it be better if we were hip to it before it snowballed into one of those things we had to remember not to forget? Would it kill the icons of the Left just for once to be on the right side at the time? America has no "best-loved Nazi" or "best-loved Fascist" or even "best-loved Republican," but its best-loved Stalinist stooge is hailed in his dotage as a secular saint who's spent his life "singing for peace."

He sang for "peace" when he opposed the fascistic armaments stooge Roosevelt and imperialist Britain, and he sang for "peace" when he attacked the Cold War paranoid Truman, and he kept on singing for "peace" no matter how many millions died and millions more had to live in bondage, and, while that may seem agreeably peaceful when you're singing "If I

Had a Hammer" in Ann Arbor, it's not if you're on the sharp end of the deal thousands of miles away.

Explaining how Stalin had "put an end to the dreams" of a Communist utopia, Seeger told Ron Radosh that he'd underestimated "how the majority of the human race has faith in violence." But that isn't true, is it? Very few of us are violent. Those who order the killings are few in number, and those who carry them out aren't significantly numerous. But those willing to string along and those too faint-hearted to object and those who just want to keep their heads down and wait for things to blow over are numbered in the millions. And so are those many miles away in the plump prosperous Western democracies who don't see why this or that dictator is their problem. One can perhaps understand the great shrug of indifference to distant monsters. It's harder, though, to forgive the contemporary urge to celebrate it as a form of "idealism."

James Lileks, the bard of Minnesota, once offered this trenchant analysis of Pete Seeger: "'If I Had A Hammer'?" Well, what's stopping you? Go to the hardware store; they're about a buck-ninety, tops."

Very true. For the cost of a restricted-view seat at a Peter, Paul, and Mary revival, you could buy half a dozen top-of-the-line hammers and have a lot more fun, even if you used them on yourself. Yet in a sense Lileks is missing the point: Yes, they're dopey nursery-school jingles, but that's why they're so insidious. The numbing simplicity allows them to be passed off as uncontentious unexceptionable all-purpose anthems of goodwill. Which is why you hear "This Land Is Your Land" in American grade schools, but not "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The invention of the faux-childlike faux-folk song was one of the greatest forces in the infantilization of American culture. Seeger's hymn to the "senselessness" of all war, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" combined passivity with condescension—"When will they ever learn?"—and established the default mode of contemporary artistic "dissent." Mr. Seeger's ongoing veneration is indestructible. But at least we now know the answer to the question "When will *he* ever learn?" At least half a century too late.

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